

FRANKLY, IT'S TIME

NEW SOCCEROO COACH IMMINENT

Inside Soccer believes that the announcement for the Socceroo coaching position is due sooner rather than later. Our sources are saying that of the four Australian-based coaches interviewed, Frank Farina is the one to be given the task of guiding us to the 2002 World Cup in Asia.

Farina, however, has yet to be officially informed, but we believe a decision, at this point, has been made.

Raul Blanco, current caretaker coach, was not one considered for the position.

Roy Hodgson, after being ruled out, may have made a late surge but it is believed that Soccer Australia will remain true to their decision to 'go local' and reward the next generation of Australian coaches.

In Farina's book, 'My World is Round' he has written about what the Socceroos mean to him. 'I also know what it's like to represent your country: quite simply, there's nothing else like it. For me, the world is truly round. I dream for, and work for, the day when all of Australia sees it that way also.'

Meanwhile Manchester United are now in China after their two-game Australian tour. Despite losing both games, an understrength Socceroo line-up did themselves proud. The fans? Well, the final figures were down on original estimates, but most were happy with the chance to see legends in the flesh.

See page two for the week that was in Australian Soccer ...



And you can win
his book!

**MAN U TOUR:
WHAT DID THE
FANS THINK?**

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**CARLTON
SIGNS
SCOTTISH
LEGEND
PAGE 9**

PLUS ... COPA AMERICA AND WORLD NEWS

THE WEEK THAT WAS ...

As Inside Soccer's front page states, It's Time! It seems that Soccer Australia (SA) has finally decided to bite the bullet and appoint a coach for the National team. The long drawn out Roy Hodgson saga has taken too much time and effort and it has got SA nowhere. Hodgson was always going to be too expensive for a national body that is in dire financial straits.

The fact that we now have a number of local coaches who have spent most of the playing career overseas means that we do not have to search for a messiah from overseas. As has been proven by the Terry Venables experience hiring an experienced overseas coach is no guarantee of success.

Coaches such as Frank Farina, David Mitchell, Eddie Krncevic and others command respect from the overseas-based players because they have paved the way for the success that these players are now enjoying. To infer that the overseas-based players would make themselves more readily available for coaches such as Hodgson shows disrespect for the likes of Farina et al.

If SA was looking for a coach with the sort of charisma that Venables exuded to provide football with cheap publicity then it has set itself the wrong objective. Australian football needs to be displayed at the World Cup and that is the only goal that the new national coach should be judged on.

The choice of Farina, if our sources are correct, is an excellent one. One of our most successful exports Farina has enjoyed success as a coach and



has the rapport with, and respect of, the players that should guarantee a smooth transition for him.

All we need now is for SA and IMG to provide him with the sort of quality and quantity of games that the national team and the football public need and deserve.

The Manchester United tour is finally over. The controversial visit has provided lots of news

space for football but, unfortunately, much of it has been negative. Some journalists, such as Sydney Morning Herald's Malcolm Knox, have had a field day. The missing players, both from United and Australia, has provided the media with lots of copy and they took the opportunity to present it many different ways.

Many have suggested that this negative publicity is another setback for football in this country. But how much of the mud will really stick?

What are the positives from the tour?

The Olyroo team (in all but name) were provided with two matches that will stand them in good stead for the next year's Olympic Games. The narrow losses to the 'best team in the world' won't diminish our reputation as many had feared.

And who got the most out of the tour? We all know the answer to that one and we hope that Mr Rene Rivkin pours some of his million dollar profit back into Australian football.

A well kept secret over the last few weeks has been the World University Games where our 'Uniroos' competed in sunny Spain. Some familiar faces were included in the team, including Perth Glory's Jamie Harnwell, but they weren't enough to make the Games a success for our team - the Uniroos finished 15th out of 16 teams. In next week's Inside Soccer we will bring you the details of the expedition.

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SHARP AUSSIES LACK KILLER PUNCH

Australia 0 (0) - Manchester United 1 (1)

Australia: Jason Petkovic, Simon Colosimo(Jacob Burns 32), Stan Lazaridis, Hayden Foxe, Alex Tobin (c), Stephen Laybutt, Brett Emerton(Clayton Zane 72), Kasey Wehrman, Aurelio Vidmar(Michael Curcija 82), Ross Aloisi(Vince Grella 72), Danny Tiatto.

Subs not used: Dragi Nastevski, Zeljko Susa, Jason Petkovic, Danny Milosevic.

Manchester United: Mark Bosnich(Raimond van der Gouw 76), Phil Neville(Michael Clegg 74), Denis Irwin (c), Jaap Stam, Henning Berg, Mark Wilson(Ole Gunnar Solskjaer 65), Jordi Cruyff(Jonathan Greening 69), Nicky Butt, Dwight Yorke, Andy Cole(Teddy Sheringham 72), Ryan Gigg.

Subs not used: John Curtis, Jesper Blomqvist, Wes Brown

Goals: Yorke 26.

Yellow Cards: Greening (71).

Referee: Simon Micallef

Crowd: 78,032

MANCHESTER UNITED TOUR
GAME TWO



By Daryl Katz

Manchester United rounded off a successful Australian tour on Sunday with a 1-0 victory over a gallant Socceroos side at Sydney's Olympic Stadium.

The youthful Australian side turned in a hard-working performance, stretching the United defence on several occasions, denied a goal only by some wasteful finishing and towering defensive displays by Jaap Stam, in particular, and Henning Berg.

Excellent performances from the elegant sweeper Hayden Foxe, combative midfield dynamo Kasey Wehrman and West Ham wing-back Stan Lazaridis ensured that Australia tested United with their positive play.

Socceroo coach Raul Blanco deployed Aurelio Vidmar as a lone striker, supported in attack by Brett Emerton, Danny Tiatto and Lazaridis, with Ross Aloisi and the impressive Wehrman holding the central midfield berths.

The Socceroos started confidently, clearly not overawed by the star-studded opposition, but struggled to find a penetrative final ball.

United proved more incisive however, and engineered the first real chance of the game after six minutes. Ryan Giggs released Dwight Yorke with a superbly weighted through-ball, but a desperate tackle from Simon Colosimo deflected the ball wide. Jason Petkovic grabbed the ball at the feet of the advancing Andy Cole.

The Socceroos created some chances of their own, a free kick from Foxe causing confusion in the United box before being scrambled behind for a corner. Minutes later, Ross Aloisi robbed Mark Wilson in midfield but could only drive his shot straight at Mark Bosnich, who saved comfortably. After 26 minutes, United made the breakthrough. Giggs threaded through another slide-rule pass for Yorke, who

this time managed to beat Stephen Laybutt to the ball and slot home past Petkovic.

Australia might have been level just two minutes later. Lazaridis played a neat one-two with Laybutt before playing the ball through for Vidmar. Some excellent defensive work from Phil Neville ensured that Bosnich remained untroubled.

Foxe went close again for Australia on 34 minutes, firing a curling shot just wide after a miscued effort from Wehrman.

Eight minutes from the break United once again showed their creativity.

When Yorke flicked on Nicky Butt's chipped pass, Cole volleyed his effort straight at Petkovic when he might just as easily have scored. Less than a minute later, Yorke supplied Giggs down the left, but the winger could not fire his shot cross the face of goal.

Australia pressed hard in the minutes before half time, Emerton, Aloisi and Lazaridis all looking threatening. Six minutes before the interval, Vidmar sent Emerton clear, but he dragged his shot across goal, and two minutes later Bosnich denied Lazaridis at close range.

After the break, The Socceroos took up where they had left off, pinning United back in their own half, but once again they simply could not find a meaningful final ball.

On 55 minutes, Giggs found Jordi Cruyff in the Australian penalty area with yet another superb ball, but this time Petkovic produced a fine save with his feet to deny the Dutch international.

A minute later, Wehrman unsuccessfully tried an audacious lob over Bosnich following a poor clearance by the United goalkeeper.

After 66 minutes, Yorke found Cole 18 yards out, the striker firing his shot low but just wide of the post.

Three minutes later, the Socceroos threatened again through

substitute Jacob Burns, who sent his shot flying high and wide after following a left-wing cross from Tiatto.

After 72 minutes, Blanco introduced Clayton Zane in an attempt to find more firepower up front. The Australians pressed hard again in the closing minutes, once again lacking only composure in the finish.

Fifteen minutes from time, substitute Vince Grella almost created a goal with a long ball for Tiatto, whose first touch was poor but still forced a brave save from Bosnich. Two minutes later, Zane shot wastefully high and wide after Vidmar had nodded on Tiatto's long ball.

With eleven minutes remaining, United introduced Jonathan Greening, who proved troublesome for Australia in the time remaining.

Australia created the final opportunity of the match, Zane sent clear down the left, but once again he failed to draw a save from Bosnich as his shot sailed high and wide.

Reflecting on the match, the United captain, Denis Irwin, paid tribute to a brave Socceroo performance. "It was a very tough match. The Socceroos played very well and made it difficult for us. They were probably the better side on the day," he said.

He went on to praise the Australian defenders. "I thought the back three played very well today. They did not let us make too many chances," he added. United coach Steve McLaren put the result in perspective, though. "We are trying to work towards August 8, the beginning of the season. This is a pre-season exercise. We have a long way to go, but we now have a foundation," he said.

The Australian coach was delighted with the performance of his side. "I

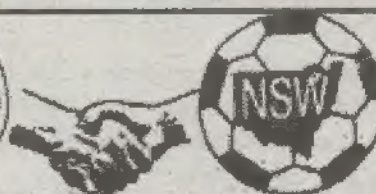


thought we played much better than in the first game. We took the game to them. I think the young players did exceptionally well," Blanco said.

While this was a creditable performance from the Socceroos, even against a Manchester United side still some way from full fitness and sharpness, the lack of firepower up front is still a concern.

Blanco seemed untroubled by the lack of finishing prowess in the side. "We created four or five chances. If you can create that many chances against a side of the calibre of Manchester United, that is very good. I think we created more chances than they did," he added.

Even taking into account the absence of players like John Aloisi and Harry Kewell, the Australians must now endeavour to find increased composure in front of goal if they are to be a force in world soccer, at either Olympic or full international level.



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MAN UNITED TOUR

PLAYER REVIEW - GAME ONE

By John Vrtaric

Game One:

Australia:

Michael Petkovic: Appeared a little nervous on his debut at the beginning but settled down and had some good moments during the game. Intercepted a couple crosses under extreme pressure and came out of his goal well when confronted with a one on one with Greening, forcing him to shoot wide. He was beaten by two superb strikes - in neither instance did he even move such were the placement and ferocity of the shots. Although he had a man standing on the near post for the second goal he probably should have moved a couple of metres off his line although the accuracy and bend of the shot gave him no chance to intercede.

Simon Colosimo: Although, again, played out of position Colosimo acquitted himself admirably under the circumstances. Defended well and his involvement in the midfield forays were done with intelligence. However, he is not a wing back and his overlapping was not successful as he had trouble getting around his opponent. Nevertheless, he showed that he is a skilful defender and will be a valuable part of the Australian team in the next decade, especially when used in the right position.

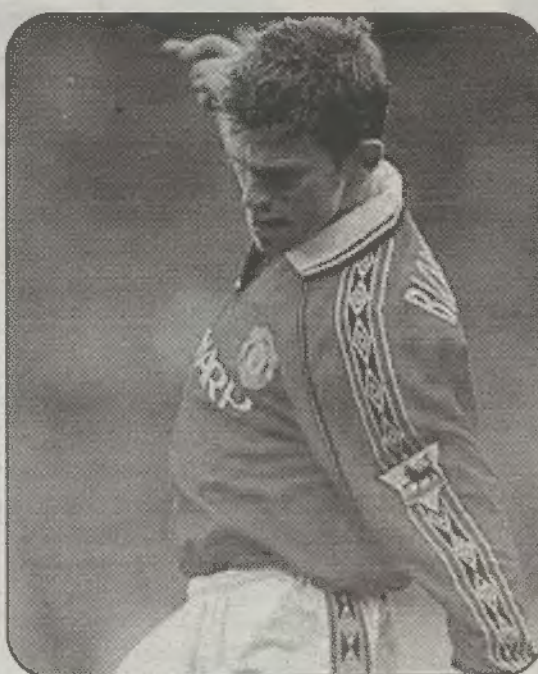
Stan Lazaridis: The long legged Lazaridis made many surging runs at the United defence but, probably, overdid it somewhat. At time he tried to beat too many defenders instead of occasionally playing the simple ball or a one-two. However, he was a threat to the United defence particularly early on when he had a couple of shots on goal. Although he lost possession of the ball on too many occasions he was amongst Australia's best players.

Hayden Foxe: Talent personified, but still learning when and how best to use it. Foxe follows in the footsteps of Okon and Zelic when it comes to brilliant sweepers. He plays the ball out of defence with skill but overdid in this game and got caught a couple of times too many. He did some superb things but has to learn not to deliver bad passes or get caught in possession in his own third of the field. The Australian coachin staff just need to figure out how best to use the troika of Okon, Zelic and Foxe.

Alex Tobin: The usual solid game from Mr Consistency - does not do anything flash but does not make too many mistakes, either. Neither of the United strikers posed too many dangers close to the goal and that is his goal.

Stephen Laybutt: Complemented his skipper with a solid display. He had some problems with Yorke who was laying off balls superbly to players running off him but that was usually far out from the goal. He should be happy with his international debut.

Brett Emerton: Another super talent waiting to discover how and where best to use it. He can play virtually anywhere on the field but it is his attacking skills that stand out. However, he seems to have performed at optimum level for the Youth team as a wing back. With the



enormous stamina that he possesses, as well as speed and skill, he seems suited to that role but needs to mature defensively. He, like Lazaridis, attempts to beat too many players on occasions - playing as right wing back he doesn't have to think about options, just take the player on. He was dangerous at times but as there was no cohesion between he and Vidmar he usually tried to beat the opponent on his own. A performance that showed glimpses of a talent that needs guidance and harnessing.

Kasey Wehrman: He livened up the game when he came on with his energetic, terrier like style. He loves to get in close to the actions and doesn't mind getting stuck in. He wasn't on long enough to make a big difference but showed he is worthy of starter's position, in this company at least.

Aurelio Vidmar: Another one played out of position - no understanding with Emerton, trouble with controlling the ball on the rough, rocky surface. In probably one his final few games for the national team he did not have a game to remember.

Ross Aloisi: A surprisingly good game from a player we haven't seen much of in the last few years. A consistent game

in which he combined well with his fellow midfielders and managed to find himself in goal shooting positions on a couple of occasions.

Vince Grella: A reasonable game from the team's playmaker - he sprayed some excellent passes but was never dominant in the true style of a playmaker. Although at twenty and playing against United, that may have been too much to ask for at this stage. He is not strong nor fast so he to control a game his vision and his passing has to be on song for him to dominate. He was one the better players for the home team.

Danny Tiatto: The little terrier who runs all day had a very good game. He took his few opportunities in the green and gold with both hands and was unlucky not to get his name on the score-sheet when his diving header was well saved by Bosnich. He ran himself into the ground, both in defence and attack, and was probably Australia's best player.

Manchester United:

Mark Bosnich: The Australian goal keeper did not have much to do in the game but what he did have to do he did with confidence. And that what he is looking for at this stage - a few easy games so that he can get to know his defence and to gain confidence in this the beginning of his second spell with United. He amused the crowd, and himself, when he took an air shot at a back pass in the second half.

Phil Neville: A steady game both in attack and defence - he and Lazaridis had a interesting duel with honours shared.

Denis Irwin: A good captain's performance - Irwin excelled in the first half with some superb crosses in situations where it seemed he wouldn't even get to the ball. He was amongst his team's better players.

David May: Neither of the central defenders had a lot of problems with the Australian strikers and both performed strongly without being outstanding.

Henning Berg: Like his look alike partner Berg was solid but untested by the weak Australian strikers. He didn't do much wrong

but nothing outstanding either.

Mark Wilson: The work horse of United's midfield - he filled Roy Keane's position taking charge of the defensive duties, which he did well, and finding time to join in the attack on occasions. A good game from a young player looking to get a foot in the door of the best team in the world.

Jesper Blomqvist: Blomqvist and Butt were United's goal scorers and best players. He played in Ryan Giggs' position on the left and ran all day. He provided his team mates with excellent passes and capped off his game with his superbly taken goal.

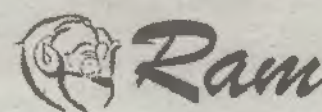
Nicky Butt: Butt was United's midfield general and controlled the game from that position. He was always in the right place at the right time and, he too, topped off his game with, probably, an even better goal than Blomqvists'.

Dwight Yorke: Yorke did not have too many opportunities but what impressed most about him was the way he was laying off balls to team mates. Even on the horribly rough surface his ball control was always sure even on the first time lay offs. A good match without threatening too often.

Teddy Sheringham: A very quiet game from the veteran and European Cup hero - he had one clear chance when he latched onto a loose ball in the penalty area and blasted it towards the top corner only to be denied by Petkovic's outstretched fingers.

Jonathan Greening: The youngster was busy without standing out although he had the best opportunity to score when a rebound saw him one on one with Petkovic - but he wasn't able to convert as he slid the ball past the keeper's right post.

Game Two Reviews - Page 10



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DEVILS' CLASS SHOWS ON MCG PADDOCK

Australia 0 (0) - Manchester United 2 (1)

Australia: Michael Petkovic, Simon Colosimo, Stan Lazaridis, Hayden Foxe, Alex Tobin (c), Stephen Laybutt, Brett Emerton, Vince Grella (Kasey Wehrman 71), Aurelio Vidmar (88), Ross Aloisi, Danny Tiatto (Jacob Burns 82).
Subs not used: Dragi Nastevski, Zeljko Susa, Jason Petkovic, Michael Curcija, Joe Didulica.
Yellow Cards: Aloisi (31), Grella (69).

Manchester United: Mark Bosnich, Phil Neville, Denis Irwin (c) (John Curtis 65), David May (Jaap Stam 79), Henning Berg (Wes Brown 79), Mark Wilson (Michael Clegg 82), Jonathan Greening (Ryan Giggs 77), Nicky Butt, Dwight Yorke, Teddy Sheringham, Jesper Blomqvist (Jordi Cruyff 74).
Subs not used: Raimond Van Der Gouw, Andy Cole.

Goals: Blomqvist (45+), Butt (76).

Yellow Cards: Greening (71).

Referee: Mark Shield
Assistants: Carlo Graser, Andy Stacey
Fourth Official: Eugene Brazzale

Crowd: 60,000 (estimate)

MANCHESTER UNITED TOUR GAME ONE

By Alan Clark

When you're invited to a party - even as a paying guest you shouldn't get churlish about the entertainment or the suitability of the venue. Yes, it wasn't the same Manchester United side that swept all before it last European season. And - yes too - it wasn't the Australian team which we'd expect would be called up to play in a World Cup Finals game.

Olympic Football officials have said that the ground will be completely re-laid before the world's second-biggest sporting event hits these shores, but it won't be a moment too soon for the football fan.

But despite all this, it was Australia versus Manchester United - whose promoters insisted upon it being known as "The Greatest Team On The Planet" - and it was certainly a football game, even if perhaps in the way that the Harlem Globetrotters versus the New York Nationals is a basketball game.

And it was also Manchester United, make no mistake - we'll see just about each of these players in League or Cup action as the forthcoming English season unfolds.

Ryan Giggs and Jaap Stam were both rested until late in the game, and Andy Cole was only ever seen lightly loosening up on the members' side of the massive arena.

Socceroo debutant goalkeeper Michael Petkovic will certainly bridle at any suggestion that his cap is of a lesser value than the honoured line of cus-

todians who had preceded him, and he'd be right. But for most of the 60,000 crowd who'd spent good money to see TGTOTP Globetrotters, Petkovic and his ten outfield team-mates were the foil - the New York Nationals if you like.

One of the goalkeepers Petkovic will have to displace if his national team career is to continue was at the other end of the ground. New Manchester United goalkeeper Mark Bosnich is the Socceroo incumbent, and were it not a Globetrotters game, it would have been he, not Petkovic between the Australian sticks.

But this is part of the churlishness which should be deplored of a guest, rather than aired.

What was to celebrate was that for the first time in nineteen months, a football game was being held at the Melbourne Cricket Ground. That massive venue was the only place able to handle the large numbers of those who wished to pay their respects. For surely that's what they were doing - both to honour TGTOTP as well as a smaller number taking a look at what sort of combination can be made of Olyroos and the cream of the domestic player

stock.

And what a mix this Australian team proved to be - were the full national team players to be available, we would probably have missed out on seeing the exciting talents of sweeper Hayden Foxe, who now plys his trade in Japan.

He had a cameo role last month in Sydney against the World All-Stars team and was not outshone - we thirsted for more of him. It might take a while before he displaces Paul Okon or Ned Zelic, but he certainly will.

So too would such a grand crowd have been denied seeing the midfield distribution skills of Simon Colosimo and Vince Grella. It's a strange thing, but Colosimo has been on display less than three kilometres away each fortnight for the last couple of domestic seasons in front of the pitifully small Carlton crowds and for a fraction of tonight's ticket-prices. And Grella was until recently a team-mate. But now both were able to display their wares in a more fitting setting. Colosimo and Grella will also certainly be fixtures of Australian teams in the next period.

Brett Emerton was played up front, in a role he has previously played in club competition, but not one we've been used to seeing him whilst wearing a national strip. The Socceroos' attacks were therefore a little light on down the right side, but the left was firing away with some inspiring work from Stan Lazaridis and a more restrained Danny Tiatto.

Tiatto didn't disappoint his legion of followers who admire his tenacious style, and was the first to be spoken to by referee Mark Shield.

But the difference between the two sides proved to be two high-quality goals.

The first was cruelly in added time after the first forty-five minutes had elapsed. Maybe we shouldn't have been surprised - United has shown this to be part of their game, much to Bayern Munich's regret.

A short corner was on for Dwight Yorke who inexplicably found himself alone in the eighteen yard area, but with his back to goal. He was rushed by defenders, but managed to send a ball back to Jonathan Greening whose first time stabbed pass fell neatly for Jesper Blomqvist now in space on the far side. Blomqvist struck as the ball fell, sending it high into the net from seven yards.

The second was equally impressive, and again arose from Australia's defensive inattention at a corner. Phil Neville was in space down the touch-line, and immediately passed the ball square to an equally unguarded Nicky Butt some 30 yards out from goal. Butt took one touch to lift the ball, then struck it on the half-volley with the outside of his foot to send it swerving into the top corner, beyond Petkovic's grasp. Ross Aloisi, who was standing



on the line, was unable to reach it with his head.

It was a stunning goal, from which there was now little chance of the game turning Australia's way.

Things could certainly have been more balanced. Midway through the first-half, a sparkling move from deep in Australia's defensive right, involving Colosimo, Tobin, Grella, and Emerton exchanging passes, sent Grella clear mid-pitch. Storming through, Grella found Aurelio Vidmar who, in turn, fed Stan Lazaridis. After a short exchange between Lazaridis and Vidmar, Lazaridis sent in something that justified your admission-price on its own, such is its scarcity value: a right-foot cross - which was aimed for space only Tiatto could reach. Tiatto's powerful diving header had to be deflected over by Bosnich.

Less than quarter of an hour into the second half, Australia could have levelled, from a corner. Aloisi found Tobin at the near post whose header to the far post was met by Vidmar under challenge from Irwin. It could have gone either way, but Irwin's presence was enough for Vidmar's header to go over the bar.

So, although the Manchester United TGTOTP Globetrotters had their expected win, it was not the one-way traffic that many had predicted given the nature of the Australia selection.



Steven Laybutt

WHAT THEY SAID AFTER GAME ONE ...

Both coaches and captains were highly critical of the state of the pitch.

Socceroo captain Alex Tobin compared the pitch to the one he played on in an infamous game of the recent past.

"In the game against Iran there were no problems with the pitch - it was a beautiful surface that night. The MCG had a good month and a half preparation before that game, and that showed.

"There was no other sports being played on it and that obviously made a huge difference. Tonight it was substandard. All players and supporters want to see a great surface so that the best possible football can be played. The contrast running from (outside the cricket-pitch onto the cricket pitch) was the major cause of players slipping."

Manchester United captain Dennis Irwin said, "It was the first time I'd played football on a cricket-pitch. It wasn't the easiest to play on."

Australian coach, Raul Blanco, commented: "If the ground is in this condition, I think we should forget about the Olympics. If it's going to be like this it's going to be a shame. Remember, the spectators have spent some big money to come and see top football - in those conditions, it's not possible.

Manchester United coach for the series, Steve McLaren, "If you wanted to make that a football pitch, you'd have to change it drastically. There's no way you could describe that as a football pitch. When we trained on it (the previous night) I was surprised at the (poor) quality, and it basically looked a rugby pitch, with a cricket pitch in the middle. The surface was uneven. I remember the game that you played against Iran and the pitch looked immaculate - we fully expected the pitch to be immaculate again tonight. We were disappointed in it."

"I think the most important thing is, for the young players who played this game, maybe they were a little too tense at the beginning of the game, it showed them that they are good players and they can compete at this level if they believe in themselves. They have the qualities to go much farther.

"In the case of Brett Emerton, (Hayden) Foxe, and Kasey Wehrman, Vince Grella, it's been a tremendous experience, and it's going to be something very special for their futures. They are all Olympic players, and (they don't have a chance to face) teams of the quality of Manchester United very often. The experience is just invaluable.

"I expected (the game) to be as it was. In the first half I thought we were doing very well. The only thing that concerned me about the game was if (my team) got stage-fright - that some players were not going to rise to the occasion. But as the game went on they started to feel that they could do the job.

"I was happy with the perform-

ance.

"You could not blame Michael Petkovic for the goal (just before half-time) - it was an exceptional goal. I thought (Petkovic) did very well - he made some great saves, and he was very confident.

"We have to be honest, and tell everybody that the grounds we intend

"We should play football in a proper ground, and this is not a proper ground. Unless incredible improvements are made, then I think they're wasting our time. This ground is substandard for Olympic football."

Raul Blanco

to use for international football are absolutely a disaster. I think it's very unfair to bring such great teams and not be able to present a ground that would do justice to the spectators and the players themselves. We are telling the players to play good football on a bad pitch, and the players and the spectators suffer for it. I think that we should let everybody know that this is not good enough.

"If the ground is in this condition, I think we should forget about the Olympics. If it's going to be like this it's going to be a shame.

Remember, the spectators have spent some big money to come and see top football - in those conditions, it's not possible."

Socceroo captain Alex Tobin opined, "(Manchester United's goals) were certainly world-class strikes, the first one was a little disappointing in the way it was built up. A short corner was played quickly and that put us in a lot of danger, but obviously the finish from Blomqvist was quality as was the second by Nicky Butt.

"There's not many goalkeepers that could have saved (Butt's goal) - it was really in the top corner.

"Overall, two world-class strikes and you've got to take your hat off to finishing like that.

"I think we were pretty pleased overall with the amount of chances that we had going forward - the way we looked quite fluent in attack. Obviously we didn't get the ball in the back of the net, but it wasn't through lack of trying.

"The MCG creates a great atmosphere with a big crowd as we had tonight. The two teams put on a good show for the supporters who came out to watch.

"Maybe (it was niggly) for ten or fifteen minutes in the first half, but I think you can put a lot of that down to a slightly bumpy pitch - the players' touch perhaps is going to let them down on occasions and that gives a chance for a defender to come in. It's a little bit slippery as well, and a couple of mis-timed tackles certainly, but I don't think there was anything malicious on either side's part.

"I've played on better (pitches), it's difficult especially with the firmer cricket-

pitch in the middle, you're going from soft grass onto a firm surface. It's a contrast that will make even a good player slip if you are changing direction. It wasn't the flattest or evenest of surfaces.

"In the game against Iran there were no problems with the pitch - it was a beautiful surface that night. The MCG had a good month and a half preparation before that game, and that showed. There was no other sports being played on it and that obviously made a huge difference. Tonight it was substandard. All players and supporters want to see a great surface so that the best possible football can be played. The contrast running from (off the cricket-pitch on to the cricket pitch) was the major part of players slipping and so on.

"I thought it was a good game, I thought it was evenly fought. Manchester United played the whole second half in front, and kept a lot of possession - as they do(that) well. But I thought we battled well - it was always going to be difficult with a new team of sorts - the guys that were making their debuts and so on, but considering that we did very well. There were some encouraging signs for the same on Sunday.

"There was a lot of positives about the game. I don't think we had the fluency of a team which has been together longer, and so there were a few communication glitches during the game - some mistakes that wouldn't have happened if we'd been a team that was longer together. But the players who had to step up did very well.

"Manchester United had a go there's no doubt about that, it's very important for them in their pre-season - fighting for a position, so they did have a go - it showed with some of the tackles that were going on out there and in the competitive spirit that the game was played in - and full credit to them for doing that."

United acting coach McLaren was happy with his team's performance.

"From my point of view, we scored two goals, we kept a clean sheet, the players got through their first ninety minutes of real work, it was a very, very good test. I thought the Socceroos did very well, they put us under pressure and worked very hard, and made it difficult for us, but we're pleased to come through injury-free.

"I thought (the state of the pitch) took a lot away from the game. Especially the (first game) that players play, they like to play on a good even surface where the ball runs smoothly, but unfortunately the pitch wasn't of a very good standard. In saying that, I thought both teams coped well on it.

"If you wanted to make that a football pitch, you'd have to change it drastically. There's no way you could describe that as a football pitch. When we trained on it (the previous night) I was surprised at the (poor) quality, and it basically looked a rugby pitch, with a

cricket pitch in the middle. The surfaces were uneven. I remember the game that you played against Iran and the pitch looked immaculate - we fully expected the pitch to be immaculate again tonight. We were disappointed in it.

"We brought a big squad and we intend to use every player available. A couple tonight had little knocks, and (some were affected) by the long flight, so they weren't risked, but everyone should be available for selection on Sunday.

"One or two players have stiffened up from the long flight. Ryan (Giggs) is susceptible to hamstring problems, so it wasn't really worth the risk. It was the same with Ole (Gunnar Solskjaer), he picked up stiffness on the flight in his back, and it was the same with Andy Cole. It'll take a few days to get over the jet-lag, and get the body used to the time again.

"To be fair, I was very surprised that the majority came through ninety minutes. I fully expected them to be flagging after about an hour. That's why I didn't make the changes until late - I wanted to take the players over the edge, just to overwork them a little bit.

"I thought (Australia's) back three were very strong, the keeper came for quite a few crosses and handled them very well. Generally as a team I thought they worked very hard and were organised. It made it difficult.

They created one or two chances, and at certain levels that's the difference between what happens at one end and what happens at the other.

(On Bosnich) "It's always difficult coming into a team and getting used to a new back-four, as it is for the back-four getting used to a new keeper. (Bosnich) pulled off one great save in the first half but wasn't really troubled after that except he was unfortunate to take a gooley early in the second half. To get that one under his belt will do him a power of good.

"(Our ability to release Bosnich) depends upon who we are playing and what our schedule is. You've got to appreciate that next season, (with) the amount of games coming up, we'd like none of our international players to be released."

United captain Dennis Irwin said, "The surface wasn't conducive to good football. More often than not you needed to take two or three touches when on a good pitch you only needed one. So I thought the level of football was half-decent considering.

(On Butt's goal) "It surprised everyone really - when you see Butty shooting at training.....

"It was a great goal, the lad on the line couldn't do anything about it either. I thought that the Jesper (Blomqvist) goal was a decent goal, as well."

THE MCG GAME

By Daniella Raco in Melbourne

They're here! England's most celebrated football side, Manchester United, arrived on our shores following their unprecedented treble, the English Premier League, the FA Cup and the European Championships only two months ago. The glamour boys from Old Trafford valued at over \$300 million on the transfer market played our own national team, the Socceroos.

As enthusiastic supporters turned out in force to catch a glimpse, of and pay homage to, the men that don the famous red shirt of Manchester United and greet some of our own home grown talent, we gauged their view on a game which for all the hype and drama promised to be a spectacle of both quality and class.

Susan from Adelaide, aged 31: "I am a Socceroo supporter but I have never been to a Socceroo game before. I'm not a great soccer fan but I still enjoyed it and it is an excellent venue. I've been here a few times and there is a lot of atmosphere, pre-match entertainment is impressive, it is worth the money because I didn't have to pay for the ticket!"

Paul from Elwood, aged 22: "I'm a Manchester United supporter, both mum and dad were born in Manchester. United didn't look like they were trying too hard, Australia did well but I expect-

ed more from United, they are not up to their treble form. The venue is excellent but the pitch looks rough. I'm not a fan of fireworks so I did not enjoy the pre-match entertainment. The price of the ticket is worth the money - I paid \$130 but I was disappointed that there was not more pies."

John, lawyer from Malvern, aged over 40: "I came for the competition and to barrack for the Australian Socceroos. It was an interesting game but I expected more passion and action. I'd like to see Manchester United play the West Coast Eagles, that would be real competition. It is a great venue and fabulous spectacle but a bit dull at half time. It was unfortunate that they got a goal just before half time."

Jacqueline, from Adelaide, aged 23: "The game was not bad but I would have liked to see more of the bigger names from Manchester. I've never been here before but it is a good venue and the pre-match entertainment was good but I expected better."

Nick, from East Bentley, aged 34: "I'm a Manchester United supporter, I thought that United's class showed in the end and they deserved to win. The



WHAT THE FANS THOUGHT OF THE MAN U TOUR ...

Socceroos

played well but

Manchester's class and technique were a couple of levels above that of Australia. I was disappointed with the ground surface and the Melbourne Cricket Ground was not built for soccer. The game lacked the atmosphere of the

Australia v Iran match. I paid \$155 for my ticket but I still think that it is worth to see such a high calibre of players. A full strength Australian side would have made it much harder for Manchester United. I was disappointed not to be part of the half time \$1million kicking competition."

THE STADIUM AUSTRALIA GAME

By Ben Cubby in Sydney

Everyone who has been to see the Socceroos play knows that feeling of anticipation and growing excitement as you approach the stadium. While you're still far away from the ground, you start to catch glimpses of green and gold, or maybe red and white. You begin to notice that many little groups of people are all heading in the same direction. Gradually the groups merge and become a single crowd. The noise level increases. Suddenly you turn a corner and the stadium is in front of you.

"Mate, this is rubbish," says John, a Man Utd supporter, as we join the masses of people heading towards the ground. "Australian crowds don't know how to sing. Most of them go to watch football as if it was going to the movies - as though you can just sit there and watch. The passion just doesn't exist like it does in the UK or Europe."

Joseph, a neutral supporter who travelled down from Newcastle strongly disagrees, pointing out that in a crowd of 78,000 there are always going to be a lot of families and 'first time' supporters who are happy to sit and watch.

"The whole singing ritual is a British thing, anyway, it doesn't mean that much to Aussies. Plus it's tied in with crowd violence."

Singing or not, there certainly is a buzz inside the ground as we make our way through the turnstiles and get our first sight of the pitch. With an hour to go before kick-off the stadium is still fairly empty, but the cheaper seats behind the goals are already filling up. Predictably, red is the dominant colour.

Not on the pitch though as Man U take us all by surprise with their white playing strips as they emerge for a pre-game warm-up. Someone comments that the Red Devils have become the 'Cream Puffs'. Another surprise is their powerful starting line-up - Yorke and Cole up front, Giggs and Cruyff down the flanks. Most people nearby are anticipating a goalfest, and a heavy defeat for the Socceroos.

Laura, a young supporter who is here with her family, comments on the distance between the stands and the pitch. "They should have built it steeper so you can get a better view," she says. "You're not as close to players as you are at the SFS. My favourite players are Ryan Giggs and Mark Bosnich, and out of the Australians I like Brett Emerton. Manchester United will win one-nil."

(How prophetic!)

Laura's mum, Janene thought that ticket prices, unlike the terraces "were a bit steep, but it basically works out alright compared to other things you can do as a family." Did they feel let down by the non-appearance of star players on both sides? "Well, a bit because we got our tickets a while ago when we thought Beckham was coming, but really it's the atmosphere you come for - the occasion - otherwise you might as well stay at home and watch it on TV."

The match gets underway and everyone settles down and becomes absorbed by the game. Bob, a Northern Spirit supporter from Manly, gives a running commentary on the game for his two kids. "Foxe to Aloisi, Aloisi back to Tobin - nice ball - look out, Wehrman's found space, he's calling for it, no, no - too late, look wide, give it to Lazaridis. No it's out for a throw. Great player, that Lazaridis."

The 'Mexican Wave' gets underway about twenty minutes into the match, generating the loudest cheers so far. Inevitably it falters and dies when it reaches the members' area but is miraculously revived at the other end of the ground. A few chants of "Aussie, Aussie, Aussie" can be heard, but when

Dwight Yorke puts the Red Devils one nil up they are drowned out by a Manchester roar.

According to staff in the members' area, the Rugby League state of origin created the loudest noise at Stadium Australia so far, although this game is apparently way ahead of the recent Rugby Union Test in this respect. Perhaps naively, I ask one of the security guards if he minds working instead of watching the game. He replies "soccer's kick and giggle, I can't stand non-contact sports." Non-contact sport? Someone should tell Simon Colosimo! And perhaps he would like to meet Jaap Stam?

As United coach Steve McLaren pointed out after the match, "more people watched us in each of these two games than we get at Wembley back home."

This, in spite of the fact that many of the tickets were outrageously overpriced, that many of the top players were missing, and that the matches were being shown on commercial TV.

Still, there is nothing like being there. To everyone who came along, whether singing, cheering or watching, it was great to see all those faces in the crowd.

WIN FRANK FARINA'S BOOK!



Yes, win Frank Farina's book 'My World is Round'. It's a great read, outlining the great man's early years in Queensland, to his AIS time and his national league career, plus his fantastic European pro career in leagues such as Serie A and Belgium. All you have to do is read Inside Soccer next week for details of the competition.

The New Zealand All Whites put in a pleasing final warm-up performance ahead of the Confederations Cup finals despite losing 1-0 to Egypt in Guadalajara, Mexico, reported AAP.

New Zealand and Egypt were locked 0-0 at halftime, the Egyptians, ranked 39th in the world, clinching the match 20 minutes into the second half.

Egypt scored through its right fullback, who headed home from a corner kick, after being left unmarked in the New Zealand penalty box.

"The result wasn't right but we did play very well for long periods in this game," All Whites coach Ken Dugdale told NZPA.

New Zealand has a number of players well-known to Aussie fans, including Vaughan Coveny, Gavin Wilkinson, Danny Hay and Sean Douglas.

In other news ... South Melbourne's GM Peter Filopoulos has resigned. He will now work for AFL club Hawthorn.

SICK KIDS MEET THEIR HEROES

By Melissa Muscat

Perhaps the only excusable reason for a team showing up three-and-a-half hours late to meet sick children is if the club is the best in the world.

Being 'Simply the Best' meant Manchester United could be forgiven for frustrating fans, media and the children at Randwick Children's Hospital, the venue for last Saturday's 'meet and greet' media opportunity with its sponsors Sharp.

Ryan Giggs, Wes Brown and Nicky Butt represented the treble winners on Saturday at a function primarily for the cancer and leukaemia patients at the hospital.

Excited fans and children were eagerly awaiting the arrival of their heroes, many dressed in Man Utd jerseys from early in the morning.

After deciding late the previous evening that a morning training session was needed, the original hospital visit time of 10.30am was changed to 1pm. Three of the triple champions ended up showing at 2pm.

The least Manchester United officials could have done to compensate was to bring the entire squad or even just look happy to be there. (Nicky Butt excepted who seemed more than happy to cooperate with the children and staff.



ic to see her soccer heroes in person. She herself is a player in the Engadine area.

When asked who her favourite player was, she replied with, "the one who scored the goal". Her mum prompted her with "Blomquist".

After the formalities, there was a presentation to the hospital from the Red Devils' sponsors, Sharp.

There was a Sharp video recorder as well as 20 tickets to Sunday's game.

There were also plenty of jerseys on which the players signed their names. These will be used for charity auctions to raise money for the hospital.

Finally, after more of the endless signing of autographs for the players and their many fans, I managed a quick word with the lads themselves.

While in the lift with Nicky Butt and



He even put a smile on the face of some of the children).

Very few words were said by the players on show, Ryan Giggs, the only to officially speak, spoke at the presentation to the hospital staff.

After the brief introduction the players were led off to the wards to pay a special visit to those children who were unable to leave their sick beds.

Despite all the chaos of the day, the children were far from disappointed.

Young Emma, a patient, was ecstatic

up-and-coming defender Wes Brown, I asked Brown if any of the Aussies had impressed him. Brown said none had.

Perhaps he was not familiar with their names? "No, I mean Australia was always going to play well, but no-one in Melbourne really stood out."

Then suddenly, with a devilish smile the peroxide blonde defender wittily remarked, "Oh yeah, Bosnich!"

So they do have a sense of humour after all.



KING OF HEARTS



McPherson, 34, knows all about games with sting, having played his entire career in one of Europe's most combative and fast-flowing leagues; he should feel right at home in the South Melbourne derbies and in the cauldrons of North Sydney and Perth Glory.

Still, it's not the same as Ibrox or Parkhead. In fact, Spurs are playing Hearts in a friendly this Saturday. Will he miss the big-time? "I'd like to think that there will be some good big games here too. No I don't miss anything. The main thing is that this is a fresh challenge here and I am really looking forward to

a million on that, then buying star players," McPherson noted. "Having said that, fans and administrators want immediate success instead of waiting a few years for good local talent to mature. Glasgow Rangers are doing this now with their own youth academy, so they won't have to rely on big signings so much in the future."

This meshes with his view that the Scottish game, at club level, "has stagnated." He feels that since he made his debut for Hearts in 1987 (against Falkirk) the game really has only improved off the park.

"It has developed perhaps in other ways than on the park. Off the park players are better looked after, paid better

though Edinburgh, where they play, is much smaller than Glasgow."

And that support is treated to entertainment by 'Hearty Harry', Hearts' club mascot. The ubiquitous Harry is however still a bit of mystery to big Davie. "I can't tell you exactly what it is (laughing) but it provides the fans with half-time entertainment, just as Rangers has 'Broxy Bear'!"

Love the names. Wonder what Carlton fans will be treated to? Whatever it is, the move to bring a high-profile Scottish international will do no harm to their small but dedicated fan-base. And if the initial indications are true (the phone had been running hot with ex-pat Scots welcoming him), then Jambos

By Aidan Ormond

While various members of football royalty regally descended on Australia last week for two games against the Socceroos, another blue-blood professional of the British game made a slightly less hyped entry into Tullamarine.

Davie McPherson, capped 27 times for Scotland, arrived to take up a two-year contract at the heart of Ericsson Cup side Carlton's defence.

For the former Glasgow Rangers and Hearts player the move has signalled a new direction in his career and a rekindling of a resolute partnership.

Carlton coach Stuart Munro and his new recruit played together in the heart of Rangers' defence earlier in the nineties - his former teammate instrumental in convincing McPherson to swap Edinburgh for Elwood (although a Melbourne winter should make him feel right at home!).

Yet just two days after arriving, instead of checking out a local Premier League game, the Scot was able to sample the delights of something a little more impressive. A 60,000 plus MCG crowd as arguably the most high-profile club on the planet, and an understrength Socceroo line-up, did battle within a short tram ride of his new home at Olympic Park.

It also gave him the opportunity to assess one of his fellow Carlton defenders. "Yeah, I thought Simon Colosimo did quite well," he surmised. "He looked sharp and made some good recovering tackles. He probably was played out of position though. There is speculation he may go to Europe, so we may not play together after all," said McPherson.

As for the encounter itself and this hardened professional saw behind the hype of the game for what Man Utd wanted out of it. "I don't think it was a brilliant game," he explained, "but there were some good goals. Man United used the game to play some of their younger players, which probably took the sting out of the game"

it."

Perhaps I'll ask him that question again after he has played at Melbourne Knights or Adelaide Sharks!

Still there are enough strikers in this country who can cause him trouble, international players such as Mori, Coveny, Awaritefe and Sterjovski. As for Scotland he named Dane Brian Laudrup as the best striker he came up against ("he had everything as a player and was so influential"). McPherson also rated former Hearts player John Robertson (now with Livingstone) as being "an exceptional goalscorer."

Speaking of class foreign players like Laudrup, the strapping defender is well placed to comment on the influx of foreign players to the Scottish game (Hearts currently have at least three). How has this affected domestic Scottish football?

"I think an overseas influence is important in any country," he stressed thoughtfully. "The key is when you start to have three or four players per side, that's when you have problems in the game within the country. While it's important because these players can give you a different perspective on training and playing the game I think to have a base of young players is

"Come out and support the club. It has big plans and ideas and the fact that I have come out all the way from Edinburgh shows that Carlton is serious, and hopefully good performances on the park will lead us to playing in the play-offs."

Davie McPherson's message to all Carlton fans and the Melbourne sports lovers.

very important.

"They can get frustrated because they don't get the opportunities. I think that is what is happening right now in Scotland. Players are getting frustrated," he added.

"It's better to spend money on local players and develop them, say spending

and the fans are looked after better in the stadia, but as for the standard on the park I think it has stalled."

He cited two reasons for this "Well I think the influx of overseas players has been one cause, but also it is to do with what the fans want," the Scot observed. "They tend to want the 'route-one' direct football style, which is probably more exciting than teams playing a patient style with more of a skillful approach, but this has not helped the game."

Carlton's new signing added that the mooted increase of the Scottish Premier, from ten to twelve teams, would improve their game (which is contrary to the accepted theory here that an increased number will reduce the standard of the NSL).

Nevertheless, from afar it still looks like the 'big two'; Celtic and Rangers, have an iron grip of power and prestige on the game there. So how does Hearts Inc., with its own superstore and large fan base stack up?

"Well I think there is a big three," he claimed. "Teams are spending millions so it is hard for Hearts to compete. But they (Hearts) pull great crowds, even

fans (Hearts supporters) and Scottish soccer lovers in general should provide a much-needed swelling of numbers to the new Carlton venture at Olympic Park.

They'll even play in a new designed kit based on the existing blue and white design.

On playing for both Rangers and Hearts McPherson felt he did not have any problem with the respective clubs' supporters. "No the fans have been good. Obviously it's sad when you go. The main thing is to give 100% and they'll respect you."

And that 100%, filled with grit and the experience of a quality international and club career - in concert with a few new signings due soon - will be invaluable as the Blues look to reclaim the glory days when they made the Grand Final in the first year.

And that was at Olympic Park. Must be a good omen.



MAN UNITED TOUR

PLAYER REVIEW - GAME TWO

By John Vrtaric

Game Two

Australia:

Jason Petkovic: Seemed to be more assured than his younger brother in the first game. Handled the crosses without any trouble and was in a good position to make a couple of reflex saves.

Simon Colosimo: Started off in the same manner as the first game, this time trying to contain Ryan Giggs who was on from the start in game two. He was having a bit of trouble with the left winger and he was forced to foul him a couple of times. Tragedy struck before he was able to exert his influence on the game when Andy Cole's stud laden lunge at the ball got him just below the knee inflicting what looks like a very serious injury.

Jacob Burns: He came on for Colosimo on the half hour and performed well and tended to get himself into better attacking positions than the man he replaced. A good feature of his game was his willingness to take shots at goal when given the opportunity, albeit the couple that he did have were way off target.

Stan Lazaridis: He was very dangerous throughout the game and performed better than the first game as he did not attempt to take on too many players. Combined well with Tiatto down the left and was probably Australia's best player.

Hayden Foxe: He showed his class again and in this game ventured forward more than the Melbourne game. Provided the spectators with some exquisite 30-40 metre passes. Again, on a couple of occasions, he was guilty of trying to do too much with the ball and was caught in possession or was forced to hurry his passes which went astray. Nevertheless, he learned from the first game and, at 21, is set to don the green and gold for many a year.

Alex Tobin: He gets pretty much the same review for each game. He played soundly and in this match stuck closer to his opponent giving the United strikers less room to move.

Stephen Laybutt: A similar game to the

first although he gave away a couple of balls in dangerous positions. The experience will do him good and he can look forward to challenging for one of the central defensive positions for the Ollyroos in next year's Olympics.

Brett Emerton (pictured): He couldn't get into the game as

much as in the first and when he did, he attempted to take the ball too far and was usually dispossessed. He was pushed into a central strikers role because of a lack of options but the position does not seem to be the long term answer and the coaches need to determine how to make best use of his talent

Clayton Zane: He came on late in the game and was provided with two excellent chances. On both occasions he was left free with only the goalkeeper to beat - he muffed both chances with shots that were well off target. The Ollyroo coach needs to look at over age players such as Viduka for the strikers role for next year's Olympics as there is a dearth of such key position players at this age level.

Kasey Wehrman: He came into the team in place of Grella and provided the midfield with more aggression as he was on the heels of the United midfield at every opportunity. His duels with Mark Wilson were particularly interesting. At times he tended to take the ball too far, particularly in the first half, and ended up losing it. In the second half he tried to pass the ball more and was more effective doing the simple things.

Aurelio Vidmar: Outmuscled and outnumbered again without an effective partner up, front Vidmar struggled again and he had few, if any, opportunities.

Ross Aloisi: Another tidy game from the ex Adelaide player - in this game he tended to sit back more to act as the cleaner for the team but still found time to move into attack. He had a couple of shots on goal which he could have

done better with.

Vince Grella: He came on late in the game and had little time to impress. He did, however, provide Zane with the best opportunity late in the game spotting him early and providing him with a perfect pass.

Jaap Stam: The Dutch star was superb - he had no trouble with the Australian strikers and ventured forward, on occasions, with some barnstorming runs. He seems to have recovered from his injury and is set for another great season.

Henning Berg: Playing the support role to Stam, Berg did what he had to with efficiency and was untroubled throughout the game.

Mark Wilson: He was probably his team's best player, particularly in the first half. He cleaned up in defence and found time to provide some creative spark in attack. Wilson had a good, physical tussle



Danny Tiatto: He had another strong game combining well with Lazaridis down the left touchline. Tiatto has taken his opportunity with both hands and is set to play a role in future Australian squads. He gave away the ball which was instrumental in United's only goal but had a good game nevertheless.

Michael Curcija: He came on very late in the game but didn't have enough time to make an impact on the tourists.

Manchester United:

Mark Bosnich: He was very comfortable in everything he did and at times his saving of well struck shots seemed to be done so nonchalantly. He will be a tremendous asset to United in the coming season.

Phil Neville: A similar performance to the first game although his opposite, Lazaridis, probably had a better game in attack. He was steady and did not let Lazaridis outplay him but he had a handful with Lazaridis and Tiatto attacking down the left.

Denis Irwin: Another one who had a steady game but he wasn't involved in attack as much as in the first game. With Giggs playing in front of him he tended to provide the attacking support down the left touchline.

with Wehrman.

Jordi Cruyff: Replaced Greening from the first game but he was very quiet, finding it difficult to get involved particularly on the right hand side as he is a natural left footed player.

Nicky Butt: He didn't get involved in the game as much as in the first and was, at times, out-hassled by Wehrman. He defended well but found it difficult to get involved in attack.

Dwight Yorke: Another one who had a quieter game than in Melbourne - well marked by both central defenders. He did have a couple of chances and when offered a one on one opportunity he finished it clinically.

Andy Cole: As usual he played the sniffer role and found himself with a couple of opportunities that he was not able to finish off. He played a typical game and will be better off for the run.

Ryan Giggs: He tended to drift in and out of the game - created some headaches on the left touchline in the first 15 minutes then drifted out of the game for a little while. He provided Yorke with a perfectly timed pass for the only goal of the game and laid on another couple of similar passes that the strikers were not able to finish off.

NSW SUPER LEAGUE

Torrential weather during the week in Sydney meant the postponement of most of the NSW Soccer Federations' matches, but one of the two Super League semi-finals did go ahead.

Bonnyrigg White Eagles and Blacktown City Demons clashed at Melita Stadium on a cold Saturday night in a repeat of last year's Grand Final, and it was the Demons who advanced straight into the Grand Final after an amazing 5-2 win.

A dominant first half performance saw the Demons go in 3-0 up at the break, with goals through Damien Brown, Damien Smith and Jon Angelucci before the half-hour mark. The second half saw Bonnyrigg hit back, but incredibly Fernando Greco in the Blacktown goal saved two penalties in the space of a couple of minutes. The Demons then survived the send-off of Damien Foxe and despite Joe Bruni pulling a goal back Blacktown scored two late goals through Aaron Holst and Stuart Cleary.

Bonnyrigg: Klos, Dee Xuereb (Green 67), Racker, Dragas, Crnokrak (Warburton 55), Richardson, Mancino, Ghisso (Harding 38), Gomez, Brun

Blacktown City: Greco, Lowe, D Brown, Langan, Riches (Sermanni 67), Foxe, Smith, Bradley (Holst 67), Yates, Angelucci (Saleman 88), Cleary

In the Under 21 match Bonnyrigg ran out 3-0 winners over Blacktown City with Milan Savic opening the scoring in the 53rd minute, followed by further goals from Danny Poljak, and substitute Daniel Borg.

In the Under 18s Blacktown beat Canterbury on penalties. The other game scheduled between the Macarthur Rams and Parramatta Eagles was washed out, with the Under 21 and Under 18 matches between the same teams taking place at 8:15pm and 6:30pm respectively at Melita Stadium on Monday night, and the first grade fixture taking place at 7:00pm at the Gabbie Stadium on Tuesday night.

The winner of the first grade game will then play Bonnyrigg at 3:00pm on Sunday the 25th July at the Gabbie Stadium, with the winner of that playing Blacktown in the Grand Final on Sunday August 1

NSW SOCCER FEDERATION SUPER LEAGUE



Tuesday 20 July

First Grade. Macarthur Rams v Parramatta Eagles
Gabbie Stadium 7.00pm

Saturday 25 July

First Grade Bonnyrigg WE v Macarthur Rams v Parramatta Eagles (Winner)
Gabbie Stadium 3.00 pm Under 21's: Bonnyrigg WE v Macarthur Rams v Parramatta Eagles (Loser)
Gabbie Stadium 12.30 pm
Under 18's. Blacktown v Macarthur Rams v Parramatta (Loser)
Gabbie Stadium 10.30 am

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SUPER LEAGUE:

Blacktown 5 bt Bonnyrigg 2.

UNDER 21.

Bonnyrigg White Eagles 3 bt Blacktown City 0, Parramatta Eagles vs Macarthur Rams W/O.

UNDER 18

Blacktown City 1 drew Canterbury M'Ville 1 Blacktown City 5 bt Canterbury M'Ville 3 (Penalties), Parramatta Eagles vs Macarthur Rams W/O.

DIVISION ONE

FIRST GRADE: Hurstville City vs Rockdale City Suns W/O, Manly Warringah vs St George W/O, Bathurst '75 2 (Own Goal 53m, B McLean 72m) bt Moorebank Sports 0.

UNDER 21: AC United vs Penrith Panthers W/O, Hurstville City vs Rockdale City Suns W/O, Manly Warringah vs St George W/O, Bathurst '75 2 bt Moorebank Sports 1. UNDER 18: AC United vs Penrith Panthers W/O, Hurstville City vs Rockdale City Suns W/O, Manly Warringah

vs St George W/O, Moorebank Sports 2 bt Bathurst '75 0.

DIVISION TWO:

FIRST GRADE. Sydney District vs Sydney University W/O.

UNDER 21: University of NSW vs Arncliffe Scots W/O, Sydney District vs Sydney University W/O

UNDER 18: Arncliffe Scots 3 bt University of NSW 0 (Forfeit), Sydney District vs Sydney University W/O

DIVISION THREE:

FIRST GRADE: Camden Tigers vs Liverpool City W/O, Hakoah 5 bt Maroubra United 1.

SECOND GRADE: Camden Tigers vs Liverpool City W/O, Hakoah 3 bt Maroubra United 1.

DIVISION FOUR:

FIRST GRADE: Balmain vs Springwood W/O. SECOND GRADE: Balmain vs Springwood W/O

WOMENS SUPER LEAGUE:

FIRST GRADE: Nepean Panthers vs Sutherland Sharks W/O, NSW Inst/Academy vs Shoalhaven Association W/O.

UNDER 21: Nepean panthers vs Sutherland Sharks W/O, NSW Inst/Academy W/O.

WOMENS STATE LEAGUE

FIRST GRADE: Manly Warringah vs Roselands W/O.

UNDER 19: Manly Warringah vs Roselands W/O.

SUPER YOUTH LEAGUE

UNDER 13: Sydney Olympic vs Leichhardt Tigers W/O, Southern Branch vs Gladesville Hornsby W/O, Central Coast vs Parramatta Eagles W/O, Newcastle Breakers vs Sydney United W/O, Southern Districts vs Macarthur Rams W/O, Blacktown City vs Eastern Suburbs W/O, Manly Warringah vs Marconi Fairfield W/O, Wollongong Wolves 3 bt Sutherland Sharks 2

UNDER 14: Sydney Olympic vs Leichhardt Tigers W/O, Southern Branch vs Gladesville Hornsby W/O, Central Coast vs Parramatta Eagles W/O, Newcastle Breakers vs Sydney United W/O, Southern Districts vs Macarthur Rams W/O, Blacktown City vs Eastern Suburbs W/O, Manly Warringah vs Marconi Fairfield W/O, Sutherland Sharks 2 bt Wollongong Wolves 1

UNDER 15: Sydney Olympic vs Leichhardt Tigers W/O Southern Branch vs Gladesville Hornsby W/O, Central Coast vs Parramatta Eagles W/O, Newcastle Breakers vs Sydney United W/O, Southern Districts vs Macarthur Rams W/O, Blacktown City vs Eastern Suburbs W/O, Manly Warringah vs Marconi Fairfield W/O, Wollongong Wolves 4 bt Sutherland Sharks 0

UNDER 16: Sydney Olympic vs Leichhardt Tigers W/O, Central Coast vs Parramatta Eagles W/O, Newcastle Breakers vs Sydney United W/O, Southern Districts vs Macarthur Rams W/O, Blacktown City vs Eastern Suburbs W/O, Manly Warringah vs Marconi Fairfield W/O, Sutherland Sharks 0 drew Wollongong Wolves 0.

DIVISION ONE YOUTH LEAGUE:

UNDER 13: Canterbury M'Ville vs Fairfield Bulls W/O, Bankstown Association vs St George W/O, Illawarra Lions vs Bonnyrigg White Eagles W/O, Canterbury Association vs AC United W/O, Hills United vs Stanmore Hawks W/O, Penrith Panthers vs Rockdale City Suns W/O.

UNDER 14: Canterbury M'Ville vs Fairfield Bulls W/O, Bankstown Association vs St George W/O, Illawarra Lions vs Bonnyrigg White Eagles W/O, Canterbury Association vs AC United W/O, Hills United vs Stanmore Hawks W/O, Penrith Panthers vs Rockdale City Suns W/O.

UNDER 15: Canterbury M'Ville vs Fairfield Bulls W/O, Bankstown Association vs St George W/O, Illawarra Lions vs Bonnyrigg White Eagles W/O, Canterbury Association vs AC United W/O, Hills United vs Stanmore Hawks W/O, Penrith Panthers vs Rockdale City Suns W/O.

UNDER 16: Canterbury M'Ville vs Fairfield Bulls W/O, Bankstown Association vs St George W/O, Illawarra Lions vs Bonnyrigg White Eagles W/O, Canterbury Association vs AC United W/O, Hills United vs Stanmore Hawks W/O, Penrith Panthers vs Rockdale City Suns W/O.

DIVISION TWO YOUTH LEAGUE:

UNDER 13: Mt Druitt Town vs Nepean Association W/O, Moorebank Sports vs Macquarie Sports W/O, Hawkesbury City vs Granville Association W/O, Mt Pritchard vs Camden Tigers W/O, Hajduk Wanderers vs CSI Schofields W/O, Ku-Ring-Gai Association vs Parramatta City W/O.

UNDER 14: Mt Druitt Town vs Nepean Association W/O, Moorebank Sports vs Macquarie Sports W/O, Hawkesbury City vs Granville Association W/O, Mt Pritchard vs Camden Tigers W/O, Hajduk Wanderers vs CSI Schofields W/O, Ku-Ring-Gai Association vs Parramatta City W/O.

UNDER 15: Mt Druitt Town vs Nepean Association W/O, Moorebank Sports vs Macquarie Sports W/O, Hawkesbury City vs Granville Association W/O, Mt Pritchard vs Camden Tigers W/O, Hajduk Wanderers vs CSI Schofields W/O, Ku-Ring-Gai Association vs Parramatta City W/O.

UNDER 16: Mt Druitt Town vs Nepean Association W/O, Moorebank Sports vs Macquarie Sports W/O, Hawkesbury City vs Granville Association W/O, Mt Pritchard vs Camden Tigers W/O, Hajduk Wanderers vs CSI Schofields W/O, Ku-Ring-Gai Association vs Parramatta City W/O.

SOCCER CANBERRA

By Nick Guoth

The Capital City Suns showed Gungahlin Juventus the way to goal when they won 3-1 at O'Connor Oval last Sunday.

It was a match of two halves, and Juventus were made to pay for not capitalising on their abundance of possession in the first stanza. The teams went into the break with no score.

Suns came out in the second half and just overwhelmed their opponents scoring their three goals in a 15 minute period. Even so, Suns coach Bill Dojcinovski believes there is plenty of work to do.

The Suns had the first chance of the game when Tony Lemezina worked his way for a shot, turning and weaving around defenders. Denis Langone, the Juventus keeper, was at full stretch to save.

This was the last the Suns were to see their opponents goal for some time as the game moved to the other side of the field. Foray after foray were made by Juventus as they searched for the opening goal.

Ten minutes in and a cross from Aidan Griffiths found Niall Stoddart. His mis-kick became a layoff for George Cattanaich, but his first time effort was blocked for a corner by Tai Tran.

Midway through the half a loose ball fell to Oscar Zamora and his spinning shot nearly eluded the Suns custodian, Tony Giannasca, who was able to get the faintest of touches and push the ball onto the upright. Even then it took some panic defence to clear the danger.

A few minutes more and a clear cut chance to Cattanaich following a delightful through ball from Tony Rinaudo, saw him find the wrong side of the upright when he should have at least given the keeper something to do.

To close the first half, the Suns generated a rare opportunity. A blind cross from Stan Blazeovski meant that Langone had to be first to the ball with Lemezina closing in fast.

Something must have been said in the change rooms at the break, because the Suns came out a completely different team. They attacked from the first minute and Juventus could do no more than balance on their back feet.

It took only seven minutes of the half for the first score. Suns Luca Ujdur found himself with the ball just outside the box. He sent a low pass that found Lemezina, who played with the ball to beat his defender before planting it into the bottom right hand corner.

Ten minutes on and it was the turn for ex-Cosmos player Ilija Prenzowski to show his touch, strength and sight as he broke through a group of players and then sent a pass that gave Pat Phommaseisy chance to score. Phommaseisy, now behind the defence and one-on-one with Langone made no mistake scoring in the bottom left corner.

Another six minutes and the game was all but over. A free kick to the Suns was awarded just outside the top-left of the box. Ujdur sent a low shot around the inside of the wall which Langone failed to handle. Substitute Peter Romaniuk was on hand to slam the ball into the roof of the net.

With fifteen minutes to go, Juventus sweeper Rinaudo pushed for-

ward and started to cause some havoc. A cross from the right by Rinaudo was n't cleared by the Suns defence. It fell to Steve Kemp and his shot took a wicked deflection that gave Giannasca no chance.

Juventus were back in the game but unlike the first half, could not find a way through. Rinaudo actually had the final two shots at goal. The first was a cross, come shot, which Giannasca tipped over for a corner and from this Rinaudo received the ball 25m out and sent a solid attempt that needed Prenzowski to deflect wide.

Suns coach Bill Dojcinovski was unhappy with the first half stating that there was no concentration at all within the team. But in the second half "we pushed forward a bit more and our one touch football paid out."

Dojcinovski was pleased with Prenzowski, Ujdur and Blazeovski, but only in the second half. "No one shined in that first period", he added.

Ex-Gippsland Falcon and Cosmos forward, Marko Perinovic scored a hatrick for Belconnen as they defeated the Queanbeyan City Lions 4-0 at Hawker Oval.

The win moves Belconnen five points clear of fifth place in the race to the finals, and further cements Queanbeyan to the bottom of the table as they search for their first points of the season.

Perinovic's first came from a corner kick that was flicked on at the near-post by Jason Dunn. Perinovic was in the right place and had an easy finish.

Then a goal kick from Cosmos defender Danny Burt went short of its intended target. Instead it found Ray Junna who was able to put the ball through to Perinovic for an easy finish in the bottom right hand corner.

The next goal was a bit of a mish-mash. Jaime Munro made his way behind the defence on the right hand side. His cross went back away from goal and found Lee Pietrukowski at the far post. Pietrukowski's shot cannoned off a defender and the keeper to Craig Unwin. Unwin then headed the ball back for Pietrukowski to put away.

Finally Perinovic completed his hatrick, but this one was started by Bels keeper Rade Kosanovic. His goal-kick went to Tim Francis who then sent Frank Agnello down the right. Agnello side-footed a cross to Perinovic who mimicked his provider by side-footing the ball past the keeper.

Bels coach Lino Fiorese was reasonably pleased with the team performance.

"We had the majority of the chances. Even so, we kept on losing the ball specially in promising positions", Fiorese said. He felt it was a team effort, but was happy with the way Scott Manson played, even if he isn't scoring as many goals as last year.

Monaro overcomes Burns team

By Hamish Neal

Burns Club abided by its policy to blood young players and Monaro's run at the top of the ACT Premier league continued with the Monaro side posting a 4-0 win in their game at a very cold and rainy Riverside oval in Queanbeyan where the conditions weren't conducive to

exciting football.

In a game that never reached any great heights, barring Monaro's second two goals, the referee stamped his authority on the game early with the issuing of two yellow cards in the first eight minutes. The first of which was when Monaro received a penalty after one of their players was brought down by the Burns central defender. Danny Macor stepped up and put it past the young Burns' keeper with no troubles.

Following that goal the Burns club had three close opportunities around the 15 minute mark of the game. But Tony Guarino remained solid in goal. The remainder of the first half saw many attacking raids by Monaro, mostly lead by Johnny Rakic, all of which saw Monaro come away unrewarded. The best of these attacks was from a corner kick in the 27th minute when the young 15 year old goalie for the Burns Club came out and punched away the ball with all the confidence of a Pat Rafter overhead smash.

The second half didn't promise anything greater in terms of open flowing football with the showers not easing and that coupled with both sides enthusiasm to attack the ball saw several players slip over, a couple during some promising looking attacking raids. Monaro managed to overcome the conditions and scored goal number two in the 17th minute through Danny Macor.

For the next eighteen minutes both sides made some good inroads in attack, Monaro in particular who were unable to convert chances from two corner kicks. Then Bruno Monterosso pulled off a spectacular diving header close in to basically shut the door on the Burns Club.

The game was going through the motions in its final minutes with both sides probably wanting to get in out of the cold when a combination of two quick kicks from a corner saw Bruno Monterosso score again.

Steve Bryant agreed with Andrew Monterosso that it was "not a 4 nil game."

Monaro's Andrew Monterosso was impressed with the Burns Club tenacity but was happy to come away from the game with 3 points after asking his team for an extra effort at the half time break. The "raw talent" of the Burns Club continues to impress their coach Steve Bryant. Bryant was particular happy with the fact that two key positions in goalkeeper and striker were filled today by a 15 and 17 year old respectively who performed admirably. But Bryant points out that they still have a way to go to make it in the Premier League but warns to watch out for his players in 2 to 3 years when they have mastered key elements of football such as "body position."

The result was not indicative of the effort of both sides and watching the game it was hard to believe that one team was leading this competition and the other was second-to-last.

Lazzari's Three beat Students

by Greg Welsh

A second-half hat-trick to Weston Creek Royals striker Steve Lazzari secured a 3-0 victory against the University of Canberra at a rain-drenched University pitch last Sunday.

The competitiveness of the Premier League this year was aptly demonstrated by a hard-fought, but scoreless, first half. University could count themselves particularly unlucky on a number of occasions as they took the game to their more-fancied opponents.

In the 27th minute, Dominic Bartone flicked the ball on for striking partner Simon Foxhill whose shot rebounded off the crossbar with Royals goalkeeper Troy Boots well beaten.

At the other end, Royals left mid-fielder Yushi Sato was creating plenty of chances for Weston's twin strike-force of Steve Lazzari and Peter Hader.

In the 34th minute Sato swung over a left-footed cross, and a diving Lazzari headed narrowly over the crossbar. Two minutes later, Sato once more crossed the ball to Lazzari, who rounded a Uni defender before striking a low shot against the near post upright.

Uni soon resumed their onslaught, and in the 40th minute Dustin Welis knocked a through ball to Foxhill on the right, who shot inside the advancing Troy Boots, but also narrowly wide of the far post.

Two minutes into the second half Foxhill looked through on goal until dragged down by Weston fullback Adrian Paragalli. Referee Ben Williams opted for the yellow card rather than the red, much to the annoyance of the University bench.

When Nick Behr's 56th minute effort was also denied by the Royals crossbar, Uni's luck seemed to be at an all-time low. One minute later Weston were ahead.

Steve Lazzari received an innocuous ball on the edge of box, rounded his marker and shot decisively. A diving Chris Freeman managed to get a hand to the effort, but could not keep the ball from skidding into his net.

Weston were completely dictating play by this stage, and were themselves unlucky when in the 70th minute Lazzari chipped Freeman only to have the ball come back off the woodwork.

Ten minutes later the Royals went further ahead when a long ball from the back skipped through the Uni defence to leave Lazzari one-on-one with Freeman. The striker faked a shot before rounding the keeper and slotting home.

The competition's leading goalscorer brought up his hat-trick twelve minutes from full-time when he collected a Royals corner, calmly turned and struck the ball into the back of the net to complete the victory.

Royals coach Jimmy Bland was pleased that his side's premiership challenge was back on track. "We've had a bit of a shaky two-to-three weeks," he said, "but it's good to get a clean sheet [and] score three goals."

The next four weeks are going to be important, as we play the top four sides.

Uni coach Rod Lynes was annoyed by a lackluster second-half effort and the ill-luck in front of goal. "I was very disappointed with the second half given our performances in the last two matches," Lynes said. "We have to try and keep a buffer between ourselves and the two teams below us - that's the aim."

INSIDE JUNIOR SOCCER

By Greg Welsh

All roads led to Canberra as 95 soccer teams converged on the nation's capital for the 1999 Kanga Cup International Youth Soccer Tournament.

It's a week where junior soccer traditionally takes centre stage in Canberra, while most of the senior ACT players enjoy a well-deserved break.

With the aim of "Uniting the Youth of the World through Football," this year the tournament has attracted teams from around Australia as well as overseas representatives from New Zealand, Fiji, China and South Africa.

The event caters for male and female players aged from under 11's to under 24's, and although the senior age group received top billing from the organisers, many of the younger teams threatened to steal the limelight on the final two days of competition at the Australian Institute of Sport.

Tournament Manager Bill Van Der Vlist says this year's competition has been an "enormous success" thanks to the record number of teams, the fine weather and his team of volunteers.

"The competition's been

very tough, extremely tough, however in the long run everyone I think's enjoyed themselves," he said.

"A lot of contact has been made between teams from different states, not just the ACT, and the different countries to visit each other, so apart from them meeting here, they're forming relationships for possible future events."

Van Der Vlist would like to see the tournament con-

tinue to expand, although he admits that the demands placed on volunteer staff may eventually force his team to call 'enough.'

"I would like to see 120 teams," he says. "[although] we may be getting to the stage where we have to put limits on it."

The administrator and referee is also hopeful that teams from Pakistan,

Georgia and Russia, who

all withdrew this year due to visa problems, will compete in 2000 along with a number of U.S. girls' teams that were unable to come this year due to a clash with the Women's World Cup.

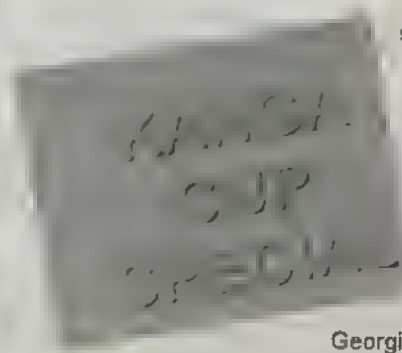
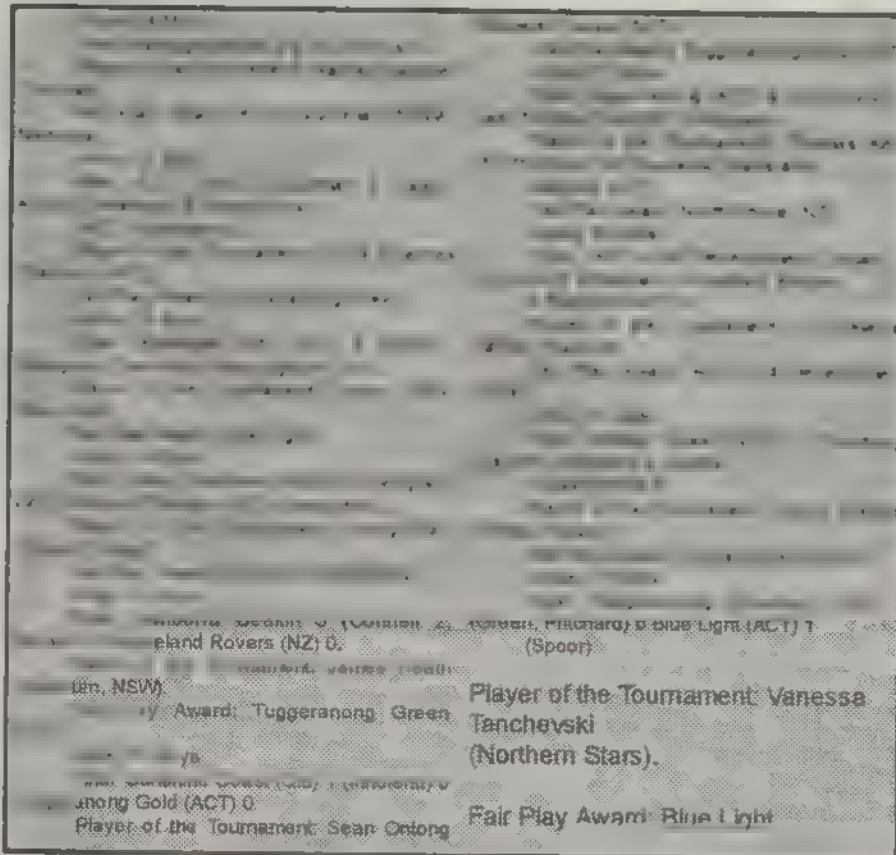
The timing of the tournament is always a difficult decision for the Kanga Cup organisers, however Van Der Vlist is philosophic. "No matter what time you run a tournament, something will be on somewhere," he says.

The event encourages not only international relations and competitive soccer but also tries to instill a spirit of fair play in the youngsters.

"Generally the spirit has been very, very good," says Van Der Vlist. "You can see that when you see the teams getting together after the game. I guess one of the high-

lights of the tournament was that all the way to Canberra, Australia to play each other it was absolutely wonderful.

And if Van Der Vlist's parting words needed any further reinforcement, the touching sight of the ACT under 14's girls development squad and the Cape Town under 14's boys team embracing in farewell proved a fitting finale to a wonderful week of soccer.



INSIDE WORLD SOCCER

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THE FEMINIZATION
OF WORLD
FOOTBALL
HAS BEGUN!



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COPA AMERICA
LIVING LA VIDA
LOCA!



PLUS UK, EUROPE
AND ASIAN NEWS
ALL COMPILED BY
INSIDE SOCCER



Copa America

BRAZIL IS BACK!

It was almost one year to the day since that ignominious defeat in Paris. In the 1999 Final of the Copa America, Brazil showed they are back in business. And Ronaldo is leading the charge.

Rivaldo scored a pair of first-half goals and Ronaldo added a goal in the second half as the four-time World Cup champions rolled over a valiant but vastly overmatched Uruguayan team.

As joyous fans turned Defensores del Chaco stadium into a festival of green and yellow, Brazil claimed its sixth title in the world's oldest tournament of national soccer teams. Uruguay and Argentina have the most, with 14 each.

The Brazilians were too much for everyone in the Copa America. They beat Mexico twice, Argentina, Chile, Venezuela and Uruguay to finish undefeated, with the most goals scored (17) and the fewest allowed (2).

Despite the loss, the tournament was by no means a disappointment for Uruguay. The young squad that came here to gain some experience won over fans with a storybook run to the finals.

And if the youngsters learned something in their upsets of Paraguay and Chile, on Sunday Brazil took them to school.

Playing with precision and panache, the Brazilians buzzed the Uruguayan net in swift, objective attacks. With the memory of last year's World Cup loss to France still fresh, the team seemed intent on avoiding the traps of overconfidence.

A swarming defence kept Uruguay

from setting up counterattacks for lone striker Marcelo Zalayeta, the team's top scorer with three goals. Fabian Carini, the 20-year-old goalkeeper who caused a sensation by stopping penalty kicks in shootouts against Paraguay and Chile, this time had little success.

Brazil took 10 minutes to figure out Uruguay's zone defense. In the 11th minute, Ze Roberto broke in on the left, dribbled by Carini but lost his angle, and his shot was tipped wide.

Ten minutes later, Rivaldo began his personal show.

Flavio Conceicao curled in a free kick from the left side and found Rivaldo at the near post, and the Barcelona midfielder headed it in for a 1-0 lead.

In the 27th minute, Ze Roberto crossed and Rivaldo trapped the ball, shook his defender with a dribble and gently chipped a shot over Carini to make it 2-0.

Uruguay's best chance came with a minute left in the half, when defender Martin de Campo fired from the right side and hit the crossbar.

Barely a minute into the second half, Rivaldo spotted Ronaldo on a breakaway and sent a perfect pass to the inter striker, who fired a rocket past Carini to make it 3-0.

The goal pulled Ronaldo even with Rivaldo for tournament scoring honors at five goals apiece.

Uruguay was unable to keep up with the repertoire of dribbles and one-touch passes, and Brazil wasted excellent chances to widen the score. Ronaldo misfired on a breakaway with

Carini beaten, and Rivaldo was disarmed after dribbling all the way to the goal line.

The Uruguayans pressed in the closing minutes, but Gabriel Alvez and Federico Magallanes fired just wide.

For Uruguay, the team's excellent campaign could signal the reawakening of a traditional South American soccer power.

Built around the core of the talented junior team that finished second in the 1997 U20 world championship in Malaysia, the youngsters showed speed, strategy and technique -- very different from the bruisers of recent Uruguayan teams.

Brazil heads to the Confederations Cup in Mexico, where it begins to prepare its under-23 team for next year's Olympics in Sydney.

Lineups

Brazil: Dida, Cafu, Joao Carlos, Antonio Carlos, Roberto Carlos, Emerson, Flavio Conceicao, Ze Roberto, Rivaldo, Amoroso and Ronaldo.

Uruguay: Fabian Carini, Martin



del Campo, Fernando Picun, Alejandro Lembo, Federico Bergara (Gianni Gigou, 73), Andres Fleurquin, Walter Coelho (Gabriel Alvez, 55), Liber Vespa (Antonio Pacheco, 45), Christian Callejas, Federico Magallanes and Marcelo Zalayeta.

Referee: Oscar Ruiz, Colombia.

Pictured above, Ronaldo and Roberto Carlos.

THE SEMIS: WHAT HAPPENED

Against Mexico, which has repeatedly reached the final four in its recent appearances as a guest in the Copa America, Brazil had its finest game.

Brazil was all over Mexico from the starting whistle. Emerson, Ze Roberto, Ronaldo and Rivaldo took turns testing Mexican goalkeeper Jorge Campos.

Mexico rallied gamely, keeping its promise to carry the attack to Brazil. But the front line of Luis Hernandez and Cuauhtemoc Blanco was unable to penetrate a solid defense, while Brazilians had all the space they needed to work their magic.

In the 25th minute, Ze Roberto streaked to the left goal line and crossed to Rivaldo, whose header rebounded off the post to Amoroso in the middle penalty area, where the Parma striker tapped it in.

Two minutes before halftime, Ronaldo took a pass from Rivaldo at the top of the penalty area, spun and was

tripped by Rafael Marquez. Rivaldo raced in, collected the loose ball and fired it into the left corner to make it 2-0.

Unable to solve the Brazilian defense, Mexico was limited to long-range efforts by Blanco, Marquez and Ramon Ramirez, but Brazilian goalkeeper Dida handled them with little effort.

"Brazil is the best team in the world," Mexican coach Miguel Lapuente said. "They were well set up in back, controlled the game and counterattacked strongly. We tried to unsettle them and couldn't. Brazil resolved everything as the game went along."

So it was to be the mighty Brazil to play in the final against a surprise choice for some.

Chile blew two penalty kicks, one in regulation time and another in the tiebreaker, and Uruguay qualified for the final of the Copa America with a 5-3 victory in

the penalty-kick shootout after a 1-1 tie.

Playing with the assurance of a veteran, Uruguay's 20-year-old goalie Fabian Carini dived to his left to knock away the kick by Mauricio Aros in the shootout. Chile didn't miss again, but Uruguay didn't miss at all.

The victory was virtually a repeat of Uruguay's win over host Paraguay in the quarterfinals by an identical 1-1 score, with Carini again the hero with a save in the tiebreaker.

Uruguay, which brought a junior team to the Copa America, faces the winner of the Brazil-Mexico matchup in the final. Again they will be underdogs, but the youngsters already have shown they can play with the best.

"I'm very glad because youth triumphed over experience," Uruguayan coach Victor Pua said. "We believed in these youngsters and they fully responded."

But now the final was to be the kids' biggest challenge.

Mexico ended a turbulent Copa America on an upbeat note with a 2-1 victory over Chile on Saturday to take third place.

A brilliant individual effort by Luis Hernandez set up a goal by Miguel Zepeda with three minutes left to snap a 1-1 tie and give Mexico its second straight third-place finish in the world's oldest tournament for national teams.

Mexico weathered a doping scandal and the suspension of two starters to cement its reputation as a first-line power in Latin American soccer.

"I'm extremely satisfied with what we did," Mexican coach Miguel Lapuente said. "We don't want to look for any excuse. The problems we had, we had."

THE CHINESE REACTION

The curse of the penalty shootout, Baggio missed and so did a Chinese player in the Women's World Cup final.

Both missed crucial penalty kicks in the same stadium -- California's Rose Bowl -- handing World Cup championships to opposing teams. In China's case, the miss meant losing the cup 4-5 to the United States after 120 minutes of hard-fought, scoreless play.

The Baggio defence was on the lips of Chinese sports fans and media, tempering the bitter loss of what many saw as a grudge match between two rivals on the field and two countries locked in political disputes. The message was clear: There was honor in being No. 2.

"Not bad Chinese girls," read the front-page headline in the Beijing Evening News, the only newspaper in the Chinese capital that published late enough Sunday to carry word of the defeat, which occurred shortly before 7 a.m.

Underneath ran a photograph of U.S. President Bill Clinton meeting members of the Chinese team after their defeat.

Sportsmanship is by no means the assured reaction to defeat in China. Stoked by decades of communist propaganda, Chinese tend to see victory in international sports as proof of China's national strength. And there was still plenty of anger, some of it ugly.

"Bomb the U.S. Embassy," read one message posted on a popular Chinese Internet site minutes after the loss in a call for revenge for the NATO bombing of the Chinese Embassy in Yugoslavia two months ago.

"Put a missile in their net," businessman Wang Jilei shouted at the TV screen in the Soccer Buff's Cafe, a regular haunt of sports fans in a working-class neighborhood in south

Beijing.

Fans in other bars shouted expletives at U.S. team members. Some hurled racist epithets at U.S. goalkeeper Briana Scurry.

They repeated a list of suspicions aired by state media in the run-up to the match: the American referees were biased; China's players were starved for decent Chinese food, and tournament organizers tired the Chinese team by making them crisscross the United States four times in earlier rounds.

But the Beijing Evening News lined up the same evidence to attest to the mettle of the Chinese players.

"This second spot did not come easily," the tabloid-style newspaper said.

China Central Television opened its first nationwide newscast after the match with footage not of the loss but Baggio missing the penalty kick that helped lose Italy the 1994 World Cup to Brazil.

"It's a normal thing to lose on penalty kicks. Even Italy's greatest star, Baggio, missed a penalty kick in



a World Cup. That's not so bad," said Wang Zhanjun, an unemployed factory worker who runs a fan club for a Beijing men's team. "It's an honor for the Chinese people."

Yeah sure, mate.

SCURRY TO QUIT SOCCER

Goalkeeper Briana Scurry has become a star overnight. And, she says racism is not a problem for her.

And, in an interview before her "Tonight Show" appearance, Scurry said she signed a lucrative endorsement deal with Pepsi.

and insulting each other across the fairways.

When Chastain got more sod than ball on one shot, Foudy shouted, "I hate when that happens." And when Chastain was asked to reveal her handicap, she said, "Julie's my handicap."

The soccer stars played with pros



She has heard people complaining she did not get enough credit for her overtime shutout last weekend against China in the World Cup title game.

"I know some people are saying the camera wasn't on me enough during the game," she said in her NBC dressing room. "But I watched a tape today, and I had the camera on me tons. Goalies never get too much notice on highly offensive teams."

"The last week has been hectic but great," she said. "Actually, I'm getting a lot of attention. Pepsi has all kinds of things planned for me. I've been on the 'Today Show,' the 'Tonight Show,' 'Good Morning America,' you name it."

The team plans to visit the White House and President Clinton on Monday.

"My mom is a little biased in that sense," said Scurry. "She probably never thinks I get enough attention."

Scurry, 27, also said she has an idea for her next career: she wants to play in the WNBA.

Scurry was an all-state basketball player in high school but opted to play soccer at the University of Massachusetts.

"I hope to change my focus in sports because basketball is the sport I love more than anything else," she said.

Soccer jerseys and ponytails replaced knit shirts and sun visors as preteen girls swarmed across a tony country club to see stars from the champion U.S. women's soccer team try their luck at golf.

Mia Hamm, Julie Foudy and Brandi Chastain (pictured), all members of the team that beat China in the World Cup final, played an exuberant 18 holes at the Wykagyl County Club, bantering with fans

Meg Mallon and Australia's Karrie Webb in the best-ball pro-am event before the U.S. LPGA Tour's JAL Big Apple Classic.

Well before they teed off, the soccer players attracted uncommon early-morning attention as they warmed up on the club's driving range.

Among the

scores of youngsters was Allison Kowalski, 6, of Wayne, N.J., who sneaked inside the spectator ropes and got her jersey -- already labeled with Hamm's name and number -- autographed by all three stars.

As Hamm and Foudy teed off before a crowd of 200, the starter announced that he had never seen that many people at 8.30.

A few minutes later, as Chastain was about to swing, she seemed put off by the usual hush among golf fans.

"In soccer we have noise," she said, "so don't be afraid. I'm serious." The gallery took up chants of "USA!" and "Go for the goal." Satisfied, she hit the ball.



A book written by American author Mariah Burton Nelson, called 'The Stronger Women Get, The More The Men Play Football' claims newspaper sports pages are the last bastion of male chauvinism. "Nowhere are women as U.S. women's soccer players and national roles," argues Ms. Burton Nelson.

SOUTH AMERICA WON'T BUDGE FOR ASIA

The South American soccer confederation has ruled out any chance of ceding a berth in the 2002 World Cup to Asia.

"South America has absolutely nothing to discuss," CONMEBOL President Nicolas Leoz of Paraguay said, "This is an acquired right and it's already signed and sealed."

Leoz said South American countries would begin the qualifying games for the next World Cup in March under allocations for the 2002 World Cup announced in December, which gave 4 1/2 berths to the continent.

Asian Football Confederation officials have argued that South America has too many and should give up a half berth to them. The 2002 World Cup will be held in Japan and South Korea.

"What the Asians request is their affair," Leoz said. "Asia

withdrew from the [FIFA] Congress. There are rules to be respected that they don't respect."

"Our position is firm, irreversible, and there is no reason to think that things will change."

The AFC has been demanding since early this year that FIFA grant it an extra berth in the 2002 World Cup above and beyond the four berths initially allocated to it - or Asian nations would boycott the tournament.

AFC general secretary Peter Velappan modified that position by saying a half berth would be sufficient. Responding to a plea from FIFA president Sepp Blatter, UEFA granted the request, offering to send its 14th and last-placed team in Europe to a playoff with a team from Asia for the final berth in the 32-team field.

But last week the AFC Executive Committee reiterated

its demand for a full berth and the entire Asian delegation walked out en masse during the FIFA Congress in Los Angeles prior to the Women's World Championship final.

Velappan said the AFC felt South America should give up its half berth, meaning Oceania - which is to play the fifth-placed team in South American qualifying for a place in the 2002 finals - would instead play the European team that UEFA is offering.

Leoz, a member of the FIFA Executive Committee which approved the initial allocations, was quoted in press reports this week that if the AFC is upset about the berths, it should withdraw as host of the finals as well.

The AFC has said Japan and South Korea, the co-hosts for the 2002 World Cup - the first to be held in Asia - would be exempt from the boycott, and that it "fully endorsed" their organization of the event.



AWARDS HONOUR ASIA'S BEST

The Asian Football Confederation's monthly awards for June centre mainly on the quest for spots in the final qualifying round of Asia's Olympic qualifying tournament.

SANYO PLAYER OF THE MONTH:
ZHANG YUNING (CHINA OLYMPIC TEAM)
AFC TEAM OF THE MONTH:
AL QADISIYA (KUWAIT)
MOTOROLA COACH OF THE MONTH:
MR. VLADIMIR FOMICHEV (KAZAKHSTAN OLYMPIC TEAM)
HEINEKEN GOAL OF THE MONTH:
MR. ZHANG XIAORUI (CHINA OLYMPIC TEAM)

The competition has been taking place across the entire continent for the last three months and came to its climax during June when the majority of teams finally booked their places in the second round, which will be played during October and November.

Sanyo Player of the Month award goes to China's Zhang Yuning, whose goals steered the Chinese into the last nine of the competition.

Zhang was on target on seven occasions in six matches, claiming vital strikes against Vietnam, against who he scored four goals in two games, and Myanmar, DPR Korea were the other participants in the group.

Zhang who was a member of the famed Chinese side that spent several years in Brazil, not only scored the goals for the Chinese but pulled the strings in the attack for the team, setting up several goals as the Bobby Houghton coached side eased through to the next stage.

While Houghton was leading China into the second round, Vladimir Fomichev was doing the same with Kazakhstan. A feat that earns him, the Motorola Coach of the Month award.

Fomichev's boys won the highly competitive Central Asian group ahead of Turkmenistan and will face off against Japan and either Qatar or Thailand in the next phase. The Kazakhs were in control of the group for most of the competition. Recording five wins, two draws and just one loss as they aim to repeat the nation's Success last year in the Asian Youth Championship by qualifying for their first-ever Olympic Games.

For the AFC Team of the Month it moved away from the Olympic-qualifying tournament to the Kuwaiti league. Where Al Qadisiya were crowned the domestic champions and as a result, take their first Asian award.

The club came through Kuwait's complicated league system to defeat Al Tadamon in the play-off final after topping the league and then the second round group section after the league was divided into their first Asian award.

The top sides then played on a knock-out basis with Al Qadisiya coming through against Al Arabi. Al Salmiya and then Al Tadamon in the final, thanks to a solitary goal from Hamad Al Saleh.

For the month's final award, the Heineken Goal of the Month, we go back to the Olympic-qualifying tournament and to China's Zhang Xiaorui.

Zhang's goal came in the games played in Shanghai during June. When China defeated Myanmar 6-0. The 22 year-old's goal was the most outstanding, the midfielder picking the ball up 30 yards from goal, skipping past a challenge and then, with his left foot, curling the ball into the top right hand corner of the net.

SYDNEY 2000 QUALIFIERS: IRAQ STUMBLES

Saudi Arabia officially made it through to the Final Round of the Asian Olympic Qualifiers when they drew 2-2 with Iraq.

Iraq needing to win by a seven goal margin opened the scoring in the 19th minute with a goal by Hashem Rida. Any hopes that Iraq had were dashed when Tareq El Mowaleed equalised three minutes later. Ahmad Abdul Jabbar scored for Iraq in the 38th minute to take a 2-1 lead at the half.

In the 84th minute, Saudi Arabia's Mohammed Ameen Dapo scored the only second-half goal to finish the game 2-2.

Saudi Arabia next face Kuwait and (Qatar or India) in Group A of the Final Round. Matches will be played in a home and away format from October 1 through November 14, 1999.

To the delight of Saudi Arabia, Jordan crushed the Iraqis 5-0 in

the second leg of the Group Three Asian Olympic Qualifiers. The Iraqis may have been looking too far ahead to their next game and found themselves down 2-0 at half-time following goals from Ghanem Hamarsheh and Hassuneh Elsheit.

In the second half the Iraqis had a chance to cut the deficit in half with a penalty kick but it was stopped by Jordan's goalkeeper Loui El Amaraan. With the momentum clearly in their favor Jordan received three

more goals from Hamarsheh, Liath Eidardour and Hamdi Saeed to finish off the scoring.

With Jordan's win, the Saudi Arabians are practically guaranteed a spot in Group One of the Final Round, where they will meet Kuwait and (Qatar or India - depending on Group Nine). Now Iraq faces the almost impossible task of beating the Saudi Arabians by seven goals on Monday to overtake them in the group.

Olympic Qualifying
Tournament
AFC



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DAYERN WINS A TROPHY!

Bayern Munich took revenge over Werder Bremen on Saturday, beating them 2-1 in the German League Cup final.

The German champions, who were beaten on penalties by Bremen in the German Cup final last month, pocketed 2.5 million marks for their third consecutive win in the traditional pre-season tournament.

New signing Paulo Sergio, (pictured right) who joined Bayern this summer from AS Roma for 12 million marks, opened the scoring in the 34th minute. The Brazilian midfielder flicked the ball over Bremen 'keeper Frank Rost from 10 meters out.

Left-back Michael Tarnat made it 2-0 from a free kick two minutes before the break.

Bremen reduced the arrears through striker Soeren Seidel in the 56th minute.

Champions League finalists Bayern were missing several key players, including playmaker and new captain Stefan Effenberg and Germany goalkeeper Oliver Kahn, both injured. Effenberg suffered his injury in Bayern's

win over Dortmund and was expected to miss at least seven weeks.

Bremen international striker Marco Bode had to pull out of the final because of an illness that makes him a doubtful starter for the Confederations Cup tournament from July 24 to August 4 in Mexico.

Bayern start the defence of their German title against Hamburg SV on August 14.

German media speculated that Bayern paid 15 million marks for the Brazilian Sergio, making him the most expensive transfer in Bayern history. Bayern did not give any details of the transfer deal.

Paulo Sergio joins another Brazilian in Bayern's forward line, Giovane Elber. Elber led Bayern with 13 goals before missing the end of the season with a serious knee injury.

Steve McManaman is destined to flourish under John Toshack at Real Madrid according to Brazilian international Roberto Carlos.

The alliance between the £12mil-

lion Englishman and the Welshman recruited from the misery of a fast-souring job in Turkey is a partnership that Carlos senses will be beneficial in making Real Madrid a force in Spain and beyond once more.

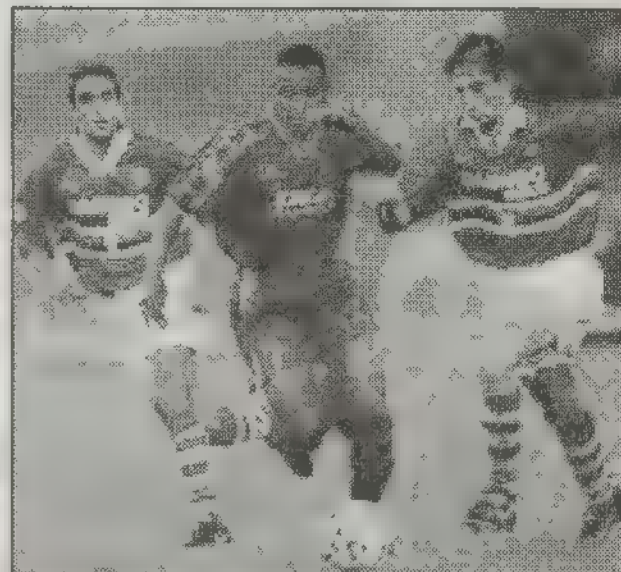
"Of course, it is a different style of football in Spain to the type McManaman has been used to playing with Liverpool in England," said Real's affable Brazilian.

"McManaman will be made welcome at the club, although it is natural he will find it difficult at the beginning.

"But from what I have seen of McManaman on the television, I know he is a very, very good player. His adaptation in Spain will be very fast, I am certain."

In sharp contrast to the stories of unrest that had been leaked by sources within Real after Toshack's appointment, Carlos views the Welshman as integral to the club's ambition.

"Toshack is proving a good coach," said Carlos, who was expected to play a pivotal role for Brazil against Uruguay in



the final of Copa America in the Paraguayan capital of Asuncion.

"At the beginning of the season some of the players at Madrid were not playing so good. Now, under Toshack, all the team is together and playing the same way. We finished second in the championship and we will start the new season with optimism."

And his assessment of Ronaldo is good news for Inter: "Here in the Copa America, Ronaldo is much, much better than he was one year ago and he's trying to be better still, both physically and mentally."

THEY'RE AT IT AGAIN: LEN V SEPP

The World Club Championship, which forced Sir Alex Ferguson's Manchester United to pull out of the FA Cup, will be a one-off event if Europe's football chief gets his way.

FIFA president Sepp Blatter's (below) dream of a permanent elite



club tournament to mirror the World Cup was dealt a shattering blow when Lennart Johansson, (right) the UEFA president, said Europe may not be pre-

pared to take part if the event lasts longer than a year.

Johansson, pipped by underdog Blatter in the voting for the top job with the world governing body, said, "We have to listen to our clubs. For this once, we are going to Brazil out of loyalty to the football family but we cannot guarantee participation in the future.

"I'm extremely disappointed that United are not taking part in the FA Cup. We cannot and will not, in the future, force our clubs to take part, just as we oppose FIFA's idea of a World Cup every two years."

The inaugural club championship, to be played in Brazil next January, is Blatter's brainchild. United go as European champions, but must miss defending the FA Cup.

Johansson also said it was time the World Cup followed the European Championship and forced the defend-

ing champions to qualify for the next finals instead of gaining automatic entry.

"Four years is a long time and form is not always the same at the end of the next period," he said.

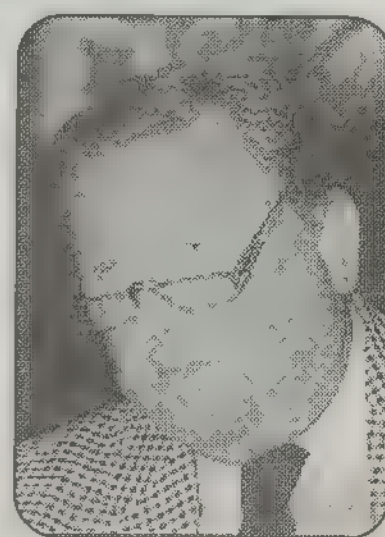
The FA has disclosed that no more money will become available to fund the campaign to bring the 2006 World Cup to this country.

Last week FIFA said the vote for 2006 was being put back from March to July next year to allow each of its six Continental confederations to study the five bids.

But new chairman Geoff Thompson said the FA would not be adding to the £942million budget.

Meanwhile, UEFA is working on a plan which could change the face of sport in Europe. It wants the European Union to remove certain powers from the courts and place it back in the hands of sport.

Sport is angry at the way athletes can challenge decisions. UEFA wants sport to have dispensations from the



laws which govern business in Europe. Should UEFA succeed, governing bodies would be able to set their own rules without fear of legal challenge.

The proposals also include a request to recognise national boundaries, spelling an end to a European Super League without UEFA approval.

POLES APART IN STADIUM SWITCH

The Polish soccer federation has moved its crunch Euro 2000 qualifying game against England to a small Warsaw stadium from a larger ground in the southwest of the country.

The switch has been made despite the ground holding only

12,000

The government has offered to pay a third of the cost of adding another 5-7,000 temporary seats, with English fans due to get 10 percent of all tickets.

The original venue in Chorzow, Silesia, would have held 32,000, which

for a game of this importance, would have been full.

"Our players feel more comfortable in Warsaw and are more used to playing on the Legia ground, it's our lucky stadium," said Jaroslaw Kolakowski, spokesman for the soccer federation.

unwanted early test after they were handed an away day at Mallorca on the opening day of the 1999-2000 campaign.

Real were beaten 2-1 on their last visit to Palma and will hardly relish such a tough assignment on the opening day of the new season, which kicks off on August 22.

Real Madrid coach John Benjamin Toshack was not very happy to find out about the draw.

After a meeting held at Real's clubhouse with Real chief Lorenzo Sanz, Toshack said at a news conference he did not believe it was a good way to start the season playing an away game on Saturday (and also a friendly game on the way since Spain will play with Croatia on August 18 and most of Real's players have been called up for the match).

"I don't like the idea of playing an away game on Saturday. This not the best way to start the season, we've been very unlucky with the draw.

"There is also a friendly game against Croatia on August 18 so probably half of the first teamers will be with the Spanish team", Toshack said.

The draw for the new season, made in Madrid midweek, has given champions Barcelona an easier looking task, as they play Real Zaragoza in their own Nou Camp stadium.

Numanica, who will be playing in the first division for the first time, have also been treated kindly by the fixture computer, which has given them a relatively undaunting home clash with Valladolid.

Rayo Vallecano, also promoted from division two last year, have been given a dream local derby at Atletico Madrid.

The other new faces in the primera liga, Sevilla and Malaga, have home games against Real Sociedad and Espanyol respectively.

Like the English Premier, many of the newly promoted teams are expected to struggle in the powerful Spanish League.

Both sides need to win the September 8 match. Poland have 12 points from six games, three more than England, who beat them 3-1 at Wembley in March.

But England's other match is home to Luxembourg, while the Poles have to play unbeaten group leaders Sweden away.

"What spoke for the Legia stadium was the atmosphere and playing there is what the manager and the team want," federation head Michal Listkiewicz told Polish television.

Poland have won all six games they have played in Warsaw in the last two years, including two Euro championship qualifiers.

Many sides playing there have not felt comfortable, indeed many say it is not an international class stadium, but the Poles are quite content as long as they win games.

Real Madrid's chances of prising the Spanish league title away from Barcelona in this coming season will face an

EURO 2000 UPCOMING FIXTURES

Friday, September 3 1999

AZERBAIJAN - PORTUGAL

Saturday, September 4 1999

LATVIA - ALBANIA
NORWAY - GREECE
SLOVENIA - GEORGIA
ICELAND - ANDORRA
RUSSIA - ARMENIA
UKRAINE - FRANCE
FINLAND - GERMANY
N. IREL - TURKEY
ENGLAND - LUXEMBOURG
SWEDEN - BULGARIA
AUSTRIA - SPAIN
LIECHT - HUNGARY
SLOVAKIA - ROMANIA
CROATIA - REP IRELAND
BOSNIA - SCOTLAND
FAROE ISL - ESTONIA
LITHUANIA - CZECH REP
BELARUS - WALES
DENMARK - SWITZERLAND

Sunday, September 5 1999

CYPRUS - ISRAEL

Wednesday, September 8 1999

ITALY - DENMARK
SWITZER - BELARUS
GERMANY - N. IRELAND
MOLDOVA - TURKEY
GEORGIA - LATVIA
GREECE - ALBANIA
NORWAY - SLOVENIA
ANDORRA - RUSSIA
ARMENIA - FRANCE
ICELAND - UKRAINE
LUXEMB - SWEDEN
POLAND - ENGLAND
ISRAEL - SAN MARINO
SPAIN - CYPRUS

HUNGARY - AZERBAIJAN
ROMANIA - PORTUGAL
SLOVAKIA - LIECHTE
MACED - YUGOSLAVIA
MALTA - R. OF IRELAND

Wednesday, September 9 1999

ANDORRA - FRANCE
ARMENIA - UKRAINE
RUSSIA - ICELAND
CZECH R - BOSNIA-HERZ
ESTONIA - SCOTLAND
FAROE ISL - LITHUANIA

Saturday, October 9 1999

BELARUS - ITALY
WALES - SWITZERLAND
ALBANIA - GEORGIA
LATVIA - NORWAY
SLOVENIA - GREECE
FINLAND - N. IRELAND
GERMANY - TURKEY
ANDORRA - ARMENIA
FRANCE - ICELAND
RUSSIA - UKRAINE
SWEDEN - POLAND
SPAIN - ISRAEL
AZERB - SLOVAKIA
LIECHTEN - ROMANIA
CZECH R - FAROE ISL
ESTONIA - BOSNIA-H
SCOTLAND - LITHUANIA

Sunday, October 10 1999

BULGARIA - LUXEMBOURG
AUSTRIA - CYPRUS
CROATIA - YUGOSLAVIA
R. IRELAND - F.Y.R. MACE
PORTUGAL - HUNGARY

PETIT LOYALTY

French star Manu Petit has given Nicolas Anelka a lesson in life.

As Lazio chiselled out another episode in the Anelka soap opera with an increased 20million bid for the brooding Gooner, Petit revealed how he spurned a chance to treble his wages last season.

French World Cup hero Petit was driven to the brink of walking out on English football because he felt referees were picking on him.

Three red cards - against Charlton, Wolves and Everton - drove Petit to despair and led him to question whether there was a secret vendetta against him because of his nationality or pedigree.

With both AC Milan and Inter waiting to spring the escape hatch, he could have jumped ship and fled to Serie A.

But after long talks with Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger, and a mountainous postbag begging him to stay at Highbury, Petit turned his back on the fortune awaiting him in Italian football.

And it's a lesson Anelka has chosen to ignore in his squalid pursuit of riches in Lazio's Roman empire.

Petit knows only too well the pressures of an alien culture, especially the language barrier, facing French migrants to the Premiership.

Throughout Anelka's unhappy stopover in North London, the pony-

tailed midfielder has been a counselor to the 20-year-old striker.

But Petit could do nothing to prevent Anelka's exclusion from the French World Cup squad, which was the seed from which his unhappiness sprang.

Petit said: "The Italian clubs can offer me three times as much as Arsenal can, but it's not just a matter of money - it's not the most important thing to me.

"What really counts is the rapport with the fans and the club. I have something really special at Arsenal that I'll never have in Italy.

"When I was really down last season, I felt that I was getting a raw deal from the referees in this country.

"We did not build on the success of last year and I missed too many games through injury and suspension. Not only that, but it seemed like the English media were really gunning for French players like Frank Leboeuf, Patrick Vieira, Anelka and myself.

"It was the Arsenal fans themselves who made me change my mind with all their love, encouragement and support."

"I also had talks with the people who really matter at the club and everything was soon sorted out and fell into place."

SQUADLING SPANIARDS

Bitter rivals Barcelona and Real Madrid, the two giants on top of the Spanish first division, have already started to clash, way before the title race starts.

After a quiet period, with Barcelona concentrating on their centenary celebrations and Real trying to salvage something from a disappointing season, sparks have been flying once again this week.

Trouble flared with Spain's Football Federation decision to grant Real a bye into the last 16 of the Spanish Cup, a move that will ease the side's fixture congestion caused by their participation in the world club championship in Brazil.

Barcelona (right) appeared happy to go along with that decision, raising no objections to the proposal at a meeting of the Spanish League. But when it came to ratifying the decision at a Spanish F.A. meeting, Barca vice-president Joan Gaspart could not resist a dig at "Royal" Madrid. "Football matches should be won on the field, not in an office, not by royal decree," Gaspart thundered. "The new season has already started badly with this botched job."

Real president Lorenzo Sanz, bolstered by the unanimous vote in his club's favour at the original meeting, revealed a talent for counter-attacking missing from his team last season.

"That's lamentable," said Sanz, "especially as it comes after we've received the support of all the clubs - including his. We're giving Spain the honour of having a representative in the world club cup."

International reaction to the decision to allow Real to miss out a round of the

cup was largely positive. Much better, it was thought, than being forced to opt out of the competition altogether, like Manchester United.

Gaspart, given the final word on the subject, thought differently, however. "The gentlemanly thing to do would be to follow the example of Manchester United and not play in the cup," said Gaspart. "We're starting the league with a rift. Mark my words."

His words duly noted, the rest of Spain's clubs promptly played down the



importance of the spat. "That was just a normal little run-in," said Sevilla president Rafael Carrion. "They've each got their own concerns to think about." Valencia boss Pedro Cortes was equally unconcerned, treating the incident as a little light relief. "We've got used to these little fights," he said. "Real and Barca will always be the same."

Real and Barca players will have to wait until October 13 at the Nou Camp before they get stuck into one another. Their club bosses clearly could not wait that long.

YUGOSLAVIA BACK

Partizan Belgrade marked Yugoslavia's return to international soccer after NATO's 78-day air campaign against the country with a 6-0 drubbing of Estonia's Flora Tallinn in the first qualifying round of the European Champions League midweek.

The result means that Partizan, who should easily survive this week's second leg in Estonia, are virtually guaranteed a place in the second qualifying round of the competition and a fierce two-legged tie with Croatian runners-up Rijeka.

The Yugoslav champions got off the mark in the 12th minute, when skipper Sasa Ilic placed the ball past Tallinn's Tomas Tohvar. Striker Milorad Pekovic made a dream debut for the club with two goals, the first coming in the 25th minute when he unleashed a fierce shot into the top corner.

Partizan went 3-0 up in the 36th minute when Vladimir Ivic headed in from close range.

Teenage striker Mateja Kezman marked a fine performance with an outstanding goal in the 56th minute, outpacing two defenders before slotting the ball home under the advancing keeper.

Kezman kept tormenting the Tallinn defence and Pekovic got his

second after the youngster's dazzling run down the right.

The goal of the day, however, went to Ivic, who completed his own double after leaving three defenders flat-footed inside the penalty box. The Partizan match was one of eight in the opening round of the competition which has started just seven weeks after Manchester United won last season's final in Barcelona.

The other big winners on the night were Zimbru Chisinau of Moldova who crushed St Patrick's Athletic of Ireland 5-0 in Dublin to guarantee themselves a second qualifying round tie against Dinamo Tbilisi of Georgia.

John O'Brien has signed a contract for three years starting July 1, 1999. The defender currently stars in the second team of Ajax. He started unlucky this year. Just when his US national coach Steve Sampson selected him for a friendly match against Belgium in Bruxelles in February, O'Brien got injured.

John O'Brien is the first American ever to play for Ajax. He left Los Angeles in 1994 when he was sixteen years old. He presently studies International Management at the Amsterdam Economic High School (HES).

Matthaeus to Carry On

Days after the 1998 World Cup, Bayern Munich goalkeeper Oliver Kahn, who is injured, will take over from Oliver Bierhoff for the new season in Italy. Matthaeus said Bayern Munich goalkeeper Oliver Kahn, who is injured. He has picked five newcomers in his 20-man squad.

INSERT YOUR HEADLINE!!

CHILLY FORECAST

The English tabloids, who are never short of a word have finally given up on the capricious Arsenal enfant terrible, Nicolas 'the press has no respect for me' Anelka and his never-ending transfer saga.

They are now saying, 'make up your own headline, we've given up.' When you can do that to the tabloids then you really are doing something wrong, or right, depending which side of the media fence you're on.

In other news ... little Barry Town fired blanks as their Euro hopes hit the rocks at Jenner Park midweek against the Maltese Falcons, otherwise known as Valletta.

The up-for-sale League of Wales club had eyed a possible pounds 500,000 windfall from an August clash with top Austrian side Rapid Vienna before kick-off.

But after a frustrating night in front of 2,400 fans, they now face a difficult looking Champions League preliminary round second leg return in Malta.

Meanwhile another minnow, Gientoran, has lodged an official complaint with UEFA about Yugoslav referee Zoran Arsich after their 3-0 defeat by Liteks in Bulgaria. The Irish League champions now need the most dramatic of turnarounds in the second leg in Belfast next week to stay in the competition.

Was it a reprisal over NATO?

Forgotten former England goalkeeper Tim Flowers is poised to join Leicester in a 1.5million deal later this week. He will replace American Kasey Keller - who is set to quit Filbert Street on a free transfer after refusing a new contract.

Blackburn boss Brian Kidd has been ordered to slash the wage bill by owner Jack Walker. And Flowers, who lost his place to John Filan, is high on the list of players he wants to ship out following relegation.

Meanwhile, long-serving defender Steve Walsh, 34, has been told he can leave Leicester - and Midlands rivals Aston Villa are ready to snap him up.

Lee Hughes has finally pledged his future to West Bromwich by signing a new three-year deal reckoned to be worth around 8,000 a week.

The Baggies rate him highly but if the right offer

came about

Youri Djorkaeff could be playing in England, if reports linking him to Newcastle and Spurs are correct.

The attacking midfielder could be allowed to leave the San Siro for as little as 4million after an unimpressive follow-up to France's World Cup triumph last summer.

But Djorkaeff is also being tempted by offers from Atletico Madrid and Real Betis of Seville in Spain. He was also sounded out by Chelsea earlier in the summer.

Newcastle are ready to offer Italian misfit Alessandro Pistone as makeweight in a player-plus-cash deal with the San Siro giants.

Tottenham would land another splash of Continental glamour if they made a firm move for Djorkaeff.

Importantly, the Frenchman has experience of European competition and Spurs are in the UEFA Cup after last season's Worthington Cup triumph.

Djorkaeff, 26 had a lean season in Serie A for Inter last term. But the Geordies can afford his 24,000-a-week wages and, with unsettled German Didi Hamann on the way out of St James's Park, Gullit is looking to start the Premiership campaign around a midfield axis of his new 6 million signing from Ipswich, Kieron Dyer, and Djorkaeff.

Still at Spurs and Israeli defender Naguan Garayeb's pounds 1.5million move to White Hart Lane from Hapoel Haifa has collapsed.

Spurs tried to renegotiate the deal for the left-back, claiming he had failed a medical because of a knee injury. Hapoel say the transfer has already gone through and are threatening to take legal action.

But Spurs director of football David Pleat said: "We're in the clear."

"He signed an agreement on what he would be paid should he receive a work permit and should he pass a medical satisfactorily."

West Ham have told disaster Chilean Javier Margas to forget all about a return to Upton Park after he audaciously asked to be allowed back. The 2-million-rated defender walked out on the Hammers after just three appearances last season claiming he had a knee injury and his family were homesick.

With some temerity, he pleaded for another chance after appearing for his country at the Copa America in Paraguay - but has been rebuffed by West Ham boss Harry Redknapp.

Margas said: "West Ham are the only club I want to play for in the Premiership. I want to do well there and stay until my contract runs out in 2002."

"I want to give 100 per cent to them now but before, when I was injured, everything was out of my hands."

"Originally I returned to Chile also because I was homesick, but now I have a new attitude," said the apparently reborn Chilean.

Redknapp replied: "I wish him all the best but it is best for all concerned if he finds a new club."

Margas scored an own goal in the recent all-stars v Socceroos clash, and looked ordinary at best against the pacy Aussie attack.

Another Hammer moving is striker Samassi Abou who has returned to France to join Troyes on trial with a view to a permanent move.

Midweek the Hammers beat Conference side Kingstonian 4-1 in a friendly, with Paul Kitson and Paolo Di Canio both on the score-sheet.

Meanwhile in Denmark, newcomers Sunderland were beaten 2-0 by Odense. Midfielder McCann was sent-off in the process. Midweek friendlies: Colchester 1 Norwich 1; Galway Utd 1 Brighton 2; F K Voss (Norway) 0 Rangers 2, Yunnan Hongta 2 (China) Crystal Palace 2

Sunderland star Michael Bridges has turned to close friend Alan Shearer to help decide his up-for-grabs future.

Sunderland's 20-year-old striker is expected to be given the all-clear to open talks with Leeds United this weekend after turning down a move to Spurs a week ago.

Leeds boss David O'Leary is ready to pay 4million for Bridges who was discovered by Jack Hixon, the same scout who unearthed England skipper Shearer.

Kewell and Bridges would be a great combination at Elland Road.

Bridges looks to have no future at Sunderland after being frozen out by boss Peter Reid, who is furious with the youngster for failing to agree a new four-year deal with the club.

He has been friends with Shearer for several years and is part of the same Tony Stephens management stable that looks after the affairs of the Newcastle striker.

A close friend of Bridges said: "He faces a big decision over his career in the next few days and he's likely to talk to Alan before deciding on his future."

"Alan always makes an effort to ring Michael on a regular basis and it's a massive boost for him to have someone of that standing to help advise him."

That's nice.

CHINA SYNDROME

Much to the chagrin of his many fans in Australia, the biggest drawcard in the galaxy of stars that is Man Utd, David Beckham (right) is today in China ahead of his teammates arriving from Australia after their two games against the Socceroos.

And with over a billion people in China, this is the perfect tour for expanding the club's massive business profile into a huge market. And judging by the reaction of fans, this could be a very lucrative market for them.

AAP reports that the news that Beckham would play in China had already spread like wildfire among football fans, driving up the blackmarket price for tickets.

The game is tomorrow night (Wed).

All 80,000 tickets sold out an unheard-of five weeks in advance. Blackmarket prices of tickets that originally went for 60 yuan (\$A11) were as high as 150 yuan (\$A27.50) two weeks ago but fell back to their face value after an earlier report that Beckham would not be present.

Fears of counterfeiting pushed organisers into printing the tickets in Hong Kong, using



HAMANN'S THE MAN

The changing face of English football: the new Guv at Liverpool is a German while the old one, Paul Ince, is off to Boro.

Dietmar Hamann will arrive on Merseyside from Newcastle after shaking hands on a 7.5million deal.

The German international midfielder thrashed out the terms of a pounds 25,000-a-week contract with Liverpool when he met executive vice-chairman Peter Robinson in his native Munich.

Hamann will not be able to complete his move from Newcastle until early this week, when he travels to Merseyside for a medical.

But he agreed in principle a four-year contract to join Liverpool - and make him his country's second-most expensive soccer export.

Only Oliver Bierhoff, who moved from Udinese to AC Milan for pounds 13.5m a year ago, has ever cost more. But Hamann insisted to the German media that, the massive price tag does not intimidate him.

"I am looking forward to the move. I feel no pressure because I am happy in England and I like the Premiership.

"I am looking forward to signing for Liverpool," he said.

Ince is no doubt looking forward to leaving, after Liverpool manager Gerard Houllier made it clear there is no place for him at Anfield.

The England international held talks with Middlesbrough and should complete a 1m move early this week after he thrashes out a pay-off from the Mersey club.

Boro boss Bryan Robson confirmed that he had agreed to sign Ince, when he said: "It is now up to Liverpool and Paul."

Houllier has now spent pounds 30m on 11 foreign players in just seven months and he needs to reduce his growing first-team squad. Ince's move will signal a series of departures, with Jean Michel Ferri - who has played just 52 minutes of football for Liverpool, also on his way out after talks yesterday with Swiss club Sochaux.

Hamann has watched his new teammates take on a German select XI. Liverpool played the match at their own striker Karlheinz Riedle's hotel and sports complex in the Bavarian village of Oberstaufen.

Riedle opened the impressive facilities just two weeks ago, and he will retire there next year, to act as a permanent scout for Liverpool.

Riedle set up the match as part of

Liverpool's pre-season training regime. They were staying just across the border in Switzerland.

Hamann angered Newcastle supporters with his criticism of the club and threats to strike at the end of the season.

The German said that his family could not settle in the north east and insisted on a move. But his transfer to Liverpool has baffled and infuriated the Toon Army. Newcastle United Independent Supporters Association have branded him "a mercenary".

NUISA chairman Frank Gilmore is baffled by Hamann's decision to move to Liverpool and warned the Merseysiders: "In my opinion, he is a mercenary."

"What really upset us was an article in our local paper before the FA Cup Final where he claimed that he was happy to stay at Newcastle for the five years of his contract.

"He also wanted his wife and children to be talking fluent English by the end of his contract. He claimed he had sorted out his supposed problems with Ruud Gullit and then, all of a sudden, his wife cannot settle.

"He decided that he was going to go on strike and had played his last game for the club.

"I put a lot of this down to agents who have made a mockery of the game.

"He has come over here and is paid a handsome salary. Then he wants more money.

"And I think he will do the same to Liverpool. I don't think Liverpool have done any wrong in all this. They heard he was available and made a move."

Gilmore is concerned that the Magpies have sold him to a rival English club rather than one on the continent.

However, the NUISA chairman is still amazed that Hamann has opted for the city of Liverpool, which has the same traditions and history as Newcastle - where Hamann's wife failed to settle.

"For what he said, it is a case of good riddance. But the thing which concerns me is that he is a quality player and to allow him to go to another English club is a mistake," said Gilmore.

"I would rather he went abroad, but to go to Liverpool is a decision which could come back to haunt us.

"Darren Huckerby and Andy Cole have both haunted us since leaving the club. But it shows that what he said at the time - that his wife could not settle - was rubbish. It is just an excuse for a mercenary."

Hammers chairman Terence Brown spent 10,000 on an unprecedented mailshot to beg Hammers fans for support at the InterToto Cup canter with FC Jokerit last week.

In an extraordinary letter to the club's 20,000 season ticket holders, Brown made a personal plea "to say how important your support will be to the team" against the Finnish part-timers.

Brown decided to hit the post because thousands of outraged Hammers fans were threatening to stay away in protest at the club's refusal to cut ticket prices for the game.

Season ticket holder Richard Mathews said: "West Ham are just being greedy. If they had cut prices in half they would have sold the place out."

West Ham were charging between 22 and 31 pounds, in line with Category A Premiership prices, and box office response at Upton Park has been sluggish.

And Gary Firmager, editor of Hammers fanzine Over Land And Sea, scoffed: "This letter from the chairman smacks of desperation - and maybe even guilt."

"It can only mean the club are terrified that the ground will be half-empty, and it looks like an admission that their hideous ticket pricing policy for this game was wrong.

"To bracket a game with Scandinavian part-timers with Category A Premiership matches against Manchester United and Arsenal is nothing short of outrageous."

CHEEKY BUGGERS!

Gooner fans were seething as bitter rivals Tottenham celebrated projecting a giant image of their new shirt onto Highbury.

Furious supporters jammed the White Hart Lane switchboard to protest about the cheeky stunt on Thursday night, which was missed by Arsenal security guards.

Highbury stadium manager John Beattie even tried to claim it had never happened, only to be contradicted by a club spokesman.

Across north London, Tottenham fans delighted in the successful foray into enemy territory.

A Spurs official said: "We have had some calls from Arsenal fans, but I would have to say that it seems like a job well done."

"We didn't want it to offend them. It was just meant to be a joke."

"But if they are complaining, it means the new shirt has attracted the publicity we want."

An Arsenal spokesman later admitted: "We are treating it as a bit of fun."

Have we heard the last of that? I think not.

Leeds boss Dave O'Leary has handed three of his misfits a spot of hard yakka in an attempt to speed up their departure from Elland Road.

The Leeds boss has decided to get tough with Clyde Wijnhard, David Robertson and Bruno Ribeiro and has sent them for a week of hard labour at Catterick Garrison after dumping them from his first-team squad.

The trio were left out of the 22-man party which departed for a week's pre-season tour to Sweden and Finland.

Wijnhard is still stalling over a 1.5m move to First Division Huddersfield, so he's been handed some 6am starts along with the rest of the reserve team squad by hard-liner O'Leary.

Robertson has not figured for 18-months after rupturing cruciate ligaments, and Portuguese midfielder Ribeiro angered O'Leary at the end of last season by demanding a transfer.

O'Leary is determined to trim his squad after bringing in three new signings this summer.

Chris Sutton doesn't have the Blues because he reckons that becoming a true Blue will finally launch his England career into orbit.

The Premiership's latest 10million man made his Chelsea debut at Birmingham on the weekend.

Sutton, who begins to earn his pounds 29,000-a-week wages, has been "sweating his guts out" in training according to assistant coach Ray Wilkins.

And the former Norwich and Blackburn striker said: "I may be 26 and Chelsea may have paid pounds 10m for me, but I am not the finished article yet - not by a long chalk."

"Also, being at a club of this size and involved in the Champions League is bound to increase your chances of being picked by England."

Player-boss Gianluca Vialli fielded virtually a full-strength side against Birmingham in what he felt was a prime chance to see how Sutton blends in.

Dane Bjarne Goldbaek turned down the Brummies' transfer hopes for him, and the fans made their feelings known to him.

OWEN STILL STRUGGLES

Michael Owen looks certain to miss the start of the domestic season and seems unlikely to be fully fit for England's European Championship qualifying tie against Luxembourg on September 3.

Liverpool manager Gerard Houllier was guarded about the player's prospects yesterday, revealing that he has 'a combination of several injuries'.

Houllier said: "He should be ready for a game in three weeks. It does not neces-



sarily mean that he will miss the start of the season."

But if he does not play for three weeks, Owen would have to take his place for the opening Premiership game against Sheffield Wednesday on August 7 having missed all Liverpool's pre-season friendlies, an unlikely scenario after his careful rehabilitation.

When asked about Owen's chances of facing Luxembourg, national boss Kevin Keegan said: "It's still a bit away. I can only follow on from what the clubs do. If Michael Owen and any players are fit and playing well, that's when they come into the England squad."

"I want him fit but, first of all, Liverpool need him fit. The most important thing is that Michael is going to be around for an awful long time."

The danger is that you abuse his ability and you abuse his enthusiasm, because he will want to play."

The 19-year-old striker has been out of action since pulling up with what proved to be a serious hamstring injury at Leeds on April 12.

He missed the last eight games of the season and was also forced to miss England's European Championship qualifiers against Sweden and Bulgaria, but had been confident that he would be ready for the big Premiership kick-off at Hillsborough.

He has yet to play for England under Keegan, having also been injured for his first game in charge, the victory over Poland at Wembley in March.

Owen joined the Liverpool squad for their nine-day stay at a training camp in Switzerland, but was among a number forced to sit out their 8-0 victory.

THE JOKE'S NOT FINISHED!

A solitary goal from Paul Kitson got West Ham's European adventure off to a winning, but unconvincing, start in the much-maligned InterToto Cup at Upton Park.

Kitson's 16th-minute header was all that separated Harry Redknapp's multi-million pound stars from Finland's humble part-timers of Jokerit, and if it hadn't been for some late heroics from keeper Craig Forrest there might have been no difference at all.

The 11,098 Hammers fans who had turned up expecting a midsummer stroll were forced to endure an uncomfortable slog and finished up jeering their team off the pitch.

The players know they now face an awkward examination in Helsinki this Saturday if they are to move to within two rounds of a place in this season's UEFA Cup.

There was certainly rarely any doubt that West Ham's first Euro adventure for 18 years would end with a victory. The only surprise was the margin.

It is fitting that Jokerit are known as the Jokers and wear a court jester for an emblem, because they had every reason to smile after withstanding wave after wave of West Ham attacks.

Whether or not a side who lie a modest eighth in the Finnish top flight are good enough to overturn a one-goal deficit remains to be seen but they have certainly given themselves a decent chance.

A packed defence and suffocating midfield asked plenty of questions of the Hammers and on their first serious outing of the season the response was a rusty one.

That said, had West Ham been five clear at the interval it would have reflected fairly on a onesided first half.

The goal was simplicity itself as Paolo Di Canio was allowed to cross from the byeline for Kitson to head in.

With the precocious 17-year-old Joe Cole running the show there was the promise of so much more but Di Canio, Trevor Sinclair, Steve Potts and Rio Ferdinand all spurned good openings.



Manager Redknapp was desperately in need of something out of the ordinary but the man best equipped to supply it, new £3.5million signing from Derby Paulo Wanchope, was up in the main stand as he waits for a work permit.

Further, dynamic Aussie wingback Stan Lazaridis was back home preparing to take on Manchester United at Stadium Australia.

In more bad news for Harry Redknapp (left) West Ham midfielder Marc-Vivien Foe could be out until Christmas after being struck down with

malaria.

It's a bitter blow for the club, who missed out on a £4.5million windfall when Foe's proposed move to Liverpool fell through at the last minute.

The Cameroon international's illness, which had nothing to do with the collapse of the transfer deal, follows a visit to his homeland without fresh immunity jabs. The player believed he was still protected by previous injections.

Now West Ham are hoping the fever has been caught in its early stages. If not, he faces a long spell out of action.

The PFA is becoming increasingly concerned about Stan Collymore's rift with John Gregory. The troubled striker has been cold-shouldered by the Aston Villa manager since returning for pre-season training following treatment for clinical depression.

Collymore - the club's record £7million signing - has been told he has no future at Villa Park and has not been allocated a squad number.

Last week he turned down a £3m move to Panathinaikos because he believed a move abroad would not help his rehabilitation.

The PFA's Brendon Batson, himself a former player at WBS, admitted: "It's not good to have a player at loggerheads with his manager like this."

"But we would only get involved on his behalf if we were called in, which so far we haven't been."

HESKEY WAITS FOR ANELKA

Emile Heskey has left the door open for a £10million move to Arsenal. The England striker is stalling on signing his new £20,000-a-week contract at Leicester until Nicolas Anelka's future at Highbury is finally resolved.

Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger admitted that powerhouse centre forward Heskey would be a suitable replacement for Anelka. "He's one we have looked at and one we are considering," said Wenger.

Heskey has a year left on his contract but has indicated to Martin O'Neill that he is willing to accept Leicester's offer of a £1million-a-year deal to sign on for an extra 12 months.

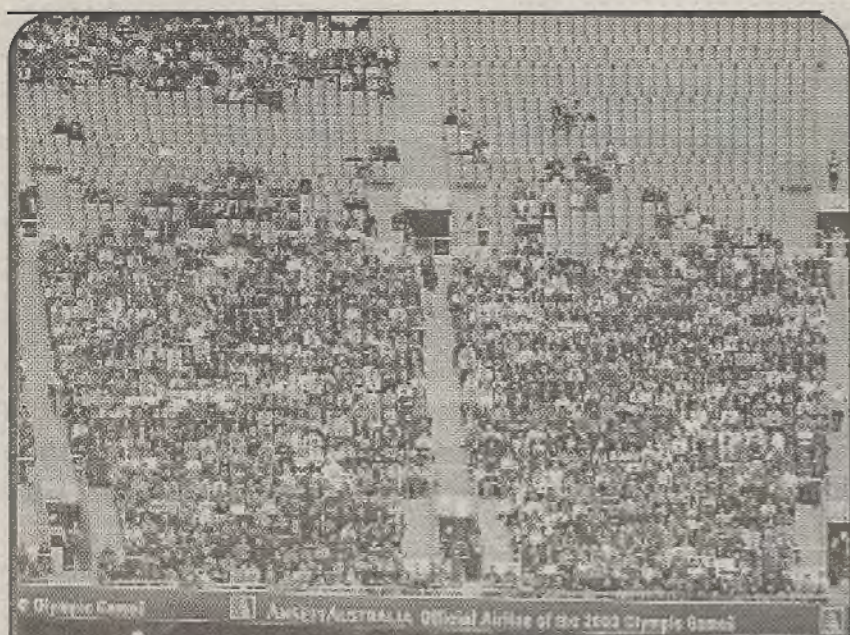
However, a source close to Heskey admitted: "His future at Filbert Street is not cut and dried."

"The signs are he is waiting to see what happens at Arsenal before putting pen to paper on his new deal with Leicester."

Meanwhile, at relegated Blackburn, Chairman Jack Walker, whose money has been integral for the club over the years, has backed struggler Kevin Davies.

Walker has reportedly told the club manager, Brian Kidd, that the player is a must for the new season. Davies had an absolutely shocking season last year, with injury and illness curtailing his season.

And Rovers' Swedish striker Martin Dahlin, 31, who was on loan to the Bundesliga, has announced his retirement.



Special Man Utd v Socceroos issue
All pics by Melbin